



THE HANDS OF COMPULSION

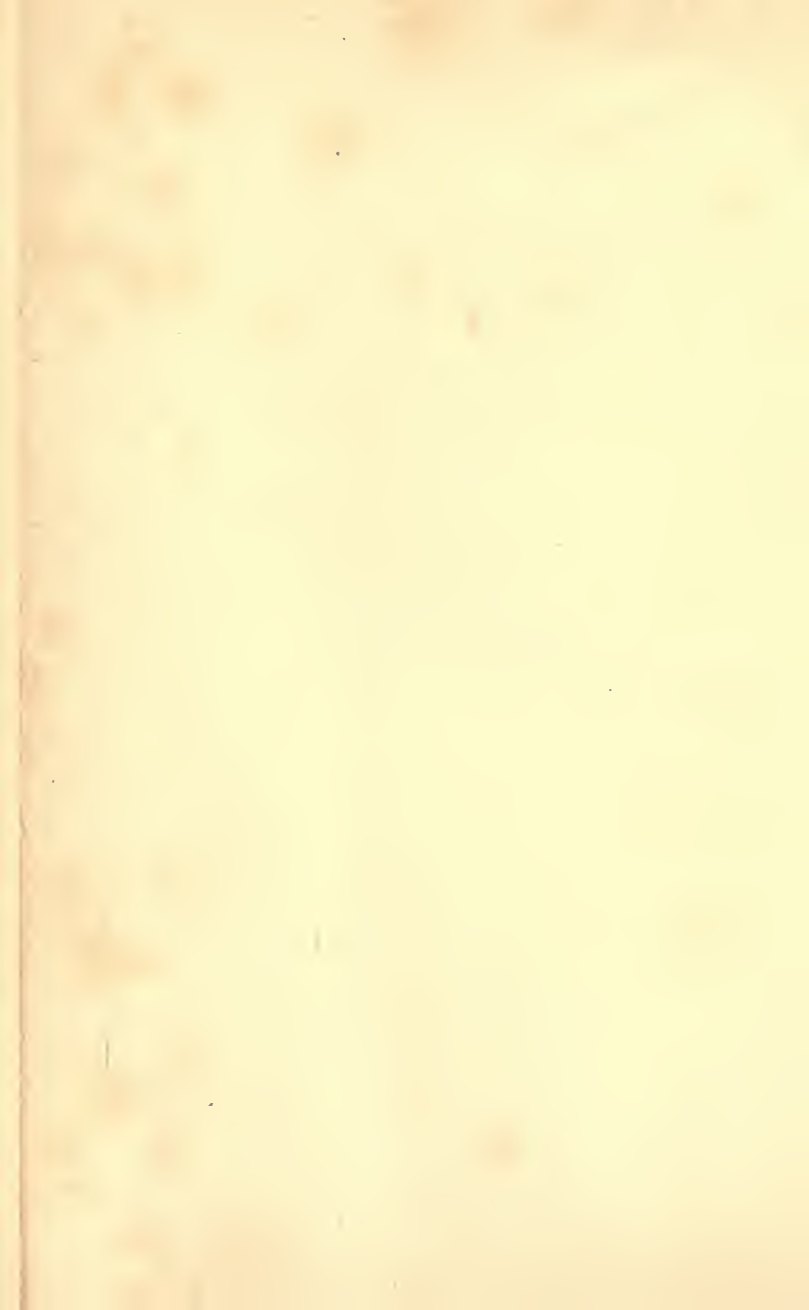
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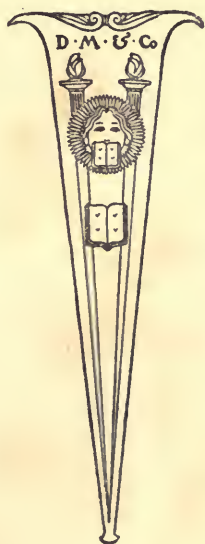


THE HANDS OF COMPULSION

BY

AMELIA E. BARR

FRONTISPIECE BY
WALTER EVERETT



NEW YORK
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TO MY DEAR FRIEND

MRS. LOUIS KLOPSCH

AMELIA E. BARR

DECEMBER, 1908.

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CHAPTER ONE

PRETTY ANNIE BRODICK

BETWEEN the fertile shores of Ayrshire and the rugged peninsula of Kintyre lies the beautiful island of Arran; famous for the grandeur and loveliness of its natural scenery, but far more famous for the many romantic ties which link it to the world, and to the church universal. For here the mighty Fingal kindled his signal fires when the fleet of Agricola darkened the waters of the Clyde. Here Ossian—the King of many songs—came to wait for that dark and narrow house, whose mark is one grey stone. Here settled the great, silent, fighting Norsemen, who hated lies, and whose religion it was to be brave. Here Robert Bruce lit the beacon that was the dawn of Bannockburn. Here the Stuarts hunted the red deer, and Cromwell hunted the adherents of the Stuarts.

It was also in this fair, rugged land that religion pure and undefiled took the deepest root; for what John Knox planted there, the Covenanters and the Free Kirk perfected. No peasantry in the whole world are so proud of their spiritual lineage, and so learned in the Holy Book that makes their title clear

to an heavenly inheritance—brave, hardy, thoughtful fishermen and farmers, walking erect in the ever conscious dignity of being sons of God.

Such a man was Robert Brodick, trader and fisher, whose cottage was in a cleft of the hills between Brodick Bay and the coast of Corrie. Five hundred years this cottage had stood in its naked, granite strength. It had quite often been enlarged and re-thatched, but its original unmortared stones were as perfect as when Gillian Brodick first laid them on the lovely, fertile acres given him by Robert Bruce, for some great personal service. And through that five hundred years Robert Brodick could name his ancestors—man by man—fighters for truth and liberty, and followers after righteousness—a spiritually royal lineage, which had moreover many peers in this little isle of the Inner Hebrides.

One evening in the year 18— he was sitting at the open door of his house watching the boats drift slowly out to the fishing ground. He was then fifty-five years old, healthy and handsome, with the massive stature of his people, a simple, dignified manner, and a disposition serious, shrewd and straightforward—the disposition of a man whose heart is within his head, and who is therefore likely to keep an even balance between his moral emotions and his mental

keenness. Anywhere, and under any circumstances, he would have been instantly known as the most outstanding of Scotchmen—Scotch as the thistle on the Scotch hills around him.

But as he sat by his open door this evening, there was nothing aggressive about the man; he was softened and made responsive to his best self, both by inward and outward influences—inwardly, well pleased at a certain circumstance he was waiting to tell his daughter, meanwhile musing on it with great satisfaction, and what he considered justifiable pride—outwardly, all nature appeared to be in his own mood of peace and thanksgiving. The majesty of the mountains that encircled him—the boundless ocean at his feet—the grandeur of the setting sun—the evening songs of the birds—the ethereal perfume from the masses of wallflowers around—all these things spoke to him in that speech which only the soul understands. And he sighed happily, and turned his face heavenward, and unto the hills, and over the blue ocean, and whispered softly in reply—“the sea is Thine, and Thou made it, and Thy Hands fashioned the dry land.”

After a moment's pause he rose, and sighing again, went into the house place and looked around. His daughter was not there. “Where at all is the las-

sie?" he muttered. "She ought to be here long ere this hour. She knows well I like to have her company as I sit resting myself a wee in the evening."

For a few moments he potted around, lifted an almanac and looked up the moon's age, took the tongs and removed a big lump of coal from the fire, complaining as he did so of "such extravagance as burning fuel just to look at the blaze o' it"—then suddenly he went to the stair foot, and called in no uncertain voice—

"Annie Brodick, what for are you delaying? I'm wanting to talk to you. Have you fairly forgotten that I am all by mysel'?"

"I'll be downstairs anon, father."

"Make yoursel' in a hurry then."

"No, no!" and the voice came nearer and ended in a charming little laugh—"No, no, father! Hurry isn't wise-like. It's yourself I've heard say many a time—'there's luck in leisure'—So leisure a wee, I'll be there anon."

"Anon! anon!" the disappointed man grumbled as he went back to his chair. "Just think o' a daughter saying 'anon' to her father, instead o' coming instanter when he called her.—The world is all agee these last twenty years or mair."

He looked round the world again, but he had

lost patience and all things were a little different. The sun was lower, the mountains and waters darker, and the wind was rising. He thought it best to carry his chair inside, and he did not do so without the reflection that Annie always carried it for him, when she was present.

In ten minutes he heard her light feet coming down the stair, and he tried to assume the look of a man robbed of some of his comforts. But the sight of Annie dispelled all shadows; when she was present he forgot her absence. Yet she was no angel, either physically or morally, only a beautiful woman with cordial eyes, and beaming face, a glory of loosely-bound brown hair, and a tall, erect figure, graceful in all its movements. She charmed, because she charmed, and if any of us had been her angel, we would have given her all she wanted.

"Well, father, here I am! Are you needing me in particular?"

He glanced up at her with the demure satisfaction of an undemonstrative Scotchman, and asked—"What for are you wearing that bonnie gown to-night?"

"Do you like it, father?"

He glanced again at the soft blue merino, falling so gracefully from its silk belt, and answered—

"It's just extraordinar becoming to you. Hech! If your poor mother, that's dead and gone, could see you and the lasses o' this day, she would be filled wi' consternation."

"Admiration, you mean, father."

"Not I. When I was a youngster, the lasses were wise-like, and a man could hope to find a prudent, loving wife among them; *but now!* Now, God help the poor lads!"

"I'm not doubting but what He'll require to help them—unless they begin to improve themselves. Women can not, and will not, be kept back, because the men folk won't go forward. Progress is our motto, father."

"To be sure. And you call going over precipices—Progress!"

"And what may you call going over precipices, father?"

"What you call 'athletic clubs' for one thing. My old-fashioned, decent principles, Annie, won't permit me to admire women who do their athletics in public:"—and he sniffed scornfully, and let his stick strike the ground with all the emphasis of a stamping foot.

"Maybe they had better do them in public than in their own homes. Nelly Thompson thrashed her

goodman last week with locked doors between her and the public, and the poor body isn't over the thrashing she gave him yet. But then he deserves more than he got—so she says."

"Thompson is a meeserable drunken man as ever lived. I'm not blaming Nelly. Whiles women have to take the upper hand. They have done so from the beginning."

"Women won't marry drunkards in the future. They are learning too much for that folly."

"Sure! Learning! Of course, of course. Women were the first to pull an apple from the tree of Knowledge, and I have no doubt whatever, that they are now bent on stripping the tree from the topmost branch. They begin with the little, low branches when they are bairns, and they go up, and up, till they are clean out o' ordinar sight and understanding."

"We're getting on bravely, father. I'm proud to say it. Look at myself for instance. I'm not taking advantage o' you, as some daughters would, but I say plainly, I stand more on stepping stones than my poor mother ever felt free to do."

"Your poor mother! What are you meaning? Weel, weel, I have never been a match for one woman—if she was civil—and I am not fool enough

to flyte at every woman in the village, or I might say in the whole o' Scotland, no to speak o' England and the rest o' creation. Let that subject pass, it isn't what I want speech with you about, this night. We have wasted time already, for there's a Kirk session at the half-hour after seven."

"What for is there a session to-night?"

"Anent an organ for the Kirk."

"Simple foolishness! There's no occasion for an organ. Our choir is as fine as can be. I'm clear against the expense o' it."

"You were strong about that grand piano for the Woman's Club."

"That was altogether a different circumstance."

"I'll likely bring the Minister back with me, and you can get him on your side o' the argument; for he's your lover—reputit—and this afternoon he confessed the same. Most respectful he spoke to me, as was only proper and becoming."

"Father, whatever are you hawering about?"

"About that fine young man, the Rev. Mr. Saunders. You don't require to be told what you know well. And I say this, he is as good a man, as any sinful woman ever had the offer of, for a husband."

"I don't care what he is."

"A handsome, clever young minister forgetting

his books for your sake! What are you expecting, Annie Brodick?"

"Not the Minister. He is the last o' my expectations—and I may say o' my wishes."

"He signified his intention of coming here after the session, and he will doubtless be offering himself to you. Now, I am heart and soul with the Minister, and I hope you will not dare to counter me in this matter."

"Father, how can I marry the Minister? I fairly hate his becks and bows, and his 'Miss Brodick's,' his small white hands, and his tight-fitting 'blacks.' I, that have lived all my life among men with the sea and the wind in their hair—men who come home day after day with that grand look on their faces, that is only got by those who wrastle with winds and waves in the very presence of death. I, that know men best in their blue Guernseys, and big sea boots, and their storm 'oils'! The Minister is not my kind. He is good, and he may be great in his way, but I know lads that are ten feet high beside him."

"But the good man is loving you, loving you, he says, perfectly and unspeakably."

"I'm not caring for him to speak. What would a girl like myself do in a manse? And it is a Glas-

gow pulpit he is seeking, and how could I live in the city, and away from the sight and the sound o' the sea? I could not. It is simply unthinkable, father."

"Listen to me, Annie. The Minister is well-to-do. It is not a stipend he is depending on. He has dry siller in the Bank o' Scotland, and O my dear lass, I would be fain and proud to see you marriet on him. It is a great thing to belong to the Kirk and the ministry."

"Maybe, father, it is just as great to belong to the men who belong to the sea. The first Kirk was a boat, and the first ministers came out o' the boats. I am clear-minded to marry among my own people. Until my mother died, you were in the boats yoursel', father, and when you stood at the wheel o' *The Maggie Brodick* and led forty sails to the fishing grounds o' the great North Sea, you were in as fine a pulpit as man ever stepped to; and you would not have changed it for the velvet-covered one in any Glasgow Kirk. I ken that, sure!"

"You ken nothing o' the dignity and power o' the pulpit. I'm not expecting any lass to do that. We'll drop the subject. Just consider a moment the siller the man has, I was hearing it named at £5000. He has been aye preaching Progress to you women folk, and he canna go behind his own words. So

then, he has the means to let you take time and opportunity to 'progress' to the end o' the world, if you want to go that far."

"I can go further than that, without his siller or his teaching. I'm not belittling money, not I, and I would never refuse it at any reasonable exchange. But to marry the Rev. Mr. Saunders, and me not loving him, would be a sworn lie to God and man. You would never ask me to forswear my own soul!"

"I would cut out my tongue first."

"I know that."

"There is one more counsel to give you—if you'll take it, Annie,—men of the sea differ. Some are good, and some are bad; and I'll tell you plainly, that Roy Morrison is not an improving companion for any good girl. I am saying nothing against his brother Willie, but Roy is not what he should be. You be to take care o' yoursel' wi' the like o' Roy Morrison, my lass."

"Have you heard any special ill of Roy Morrison, father?"

"There is a story afloat to-day, but it isna fully proved yet. I wonder you haven't heard it from some one or ither. But this, or that, I have taken the lad's measure, and I think him but a poor creature. I am judging him myself. I heard him talk-

ing about women a few days ago to Robert Sennex, and I know this—when lads give bad characters to young women, they have worse characters themselves.”

“Why did you let him do it, father?”

“I did not let him do it. I very quickly told him that the lad who spoke ill of women murdered his own mother’s good name. He is a cunning, stealthy lad, and you will require to read him backward. Forbye he has got up an ugly quarrel with his brother Will anent you.”

“I’ll have nothing to do with lads who make quarrels out o’ me; and I shall tell both o’ the Morrisons that much, quickly. What were you hearing about the quarrel, father?”

“I will tell you what I heard. It seems Will Morrison bought a new boat—just a small yawl—and he called her *The Annie Brodick*. And Roy Morrison also bought a new yawl, and he called his *The Bonnie Annie*. Last night some ill-willy fool passed a smirch o’ black paint over the name on Will’s boat, and he is thinking it was his brother Roy’s doing—and saying so.”

“It was a shameful thing for anyone to do. It was *my name* they blacked. Are you minding that fact, father?”

“Is it at all likely I’m forgetting it? See that *you* keep it in mind. If Will does not get at the truth, I shall sift the facts mysel’ till no lie is left in them.”

“I cannot think Roy did a wicked thing like that. Roy and Will were always brotherly——”

“Until you came between them.”

“Father!”

“They weren’t very brotherly as I passed them this afternoon. Will was stroking his arms bare to the shoulder—just asking for a fight, you ken—and Roy went by him wi’ such an ironical look, and such a scornful laugh, as might well raise the deil in any heart not full o’ the grace o’ God.”

“Does Roy admit that he did the shameful thing?”

“Roy admits nothing. Like a Scotchman in a strait, he gets behint his questions. ‘Does anybody think he would do the like? Will anybody say he did do it? Was it likely he would blacken the name he loves best in a’ the world? Do folks take him for a fool? What would he make by such a dirty trick?’ and the like remarks. And all the time storming and swaggering like the sea gone mad. I’ll just leave the story to your consideration, Annie. Make what you think out o’ it, but if you would be guided

into the safety and respectability, the Minister could, and would give you——”

“Father, the Minister is clean out o’ the question.”

“Well, well, I see that I have spoken too late. I’ll away to the byre, and look after the beasts before I go to the Kirk. And it comes to my heart this night, how the Almighty Father felt, when he said by his servant Isaiah—the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel—his bairns, you ken—doth not know; my people—my bairns—do not consider.”

“Father, I’m fairly ashamed o’ you likening your own leal, loving daughter to those headstrong, murmuring Jews, that no King could govern, and that God himself couldn’t please. It isn’t kind o’ you. It isn’t just. You know well I shall do the thing that is right, if I break my heart to do it.”

“What talk is there of breaking hearts? All perfect nonsense! A good heart never breaks. It has no occasion to break. What you cannot change, you can call ‘the will of God,’ and if you will what God wills, then there is peace. Never let me hear you speak again of any such foolishness as a breaking heart.”

He waited for no reply, and Annie was not inclined to make one. She walked into the garden,

and leaning on the stone wall that surrounded it, let the fresh breeze blow into her hair and face, and her eyes wander over the beautiful land. The sun had set, but there was still a mist of gold and purple over the mountains, standing like a great host at rest; yet opening out here and there, into wistful stretches of daffodil sky. The heavens were full of stars, which threw into the grey twilight a white sidereal radiance. Suddenly a thrush sang out joyously, and its song found a quick echo in Annie's hopeful heart:—

“You bonnie bird,” she said, as she turned her head to the bush where the minstrel sang above his brooding mate—“You bonnie, bonnie bird! If you can trust, I can trust. If you can love, I can love. If you can sing, I can sing;” and forthwith the soft, still night was thrilled with a melody so simple, and so exquisite, that all nature seemed to listen to the liquid music of notes, that lovers have sung for a thousand years, and may sing for a thousand years longer—if Love lives, and music lives to speak for love:—

“I love ne'er a laddie but one,
He loves ne'er a lassie but me;
He is willing to make me his own,
And his own I am willing to be.”

The disappointed and unhappy father listened, and sighed heavily, and at the same time—almost unconsciously—gave the beasties an extra armful of fodder. Memory was busy with his heart—his wife had sung the same song to him—he recalled one night in particular, then suddenly checking his reminiscent self, and muttering “There’s no fool like an old fool,” he locked his barn, and going to the house, put on rapidly his street coat, and with it such reasonable reflections as a proposed Kirk-session called forth.

Annie walked to the gate and opened it for him, and he said sarcastically—though the sarcasm was veined all through with unsuspected pathos—

“I wouldn’t turn poetical for any sake, Annie.”

“Poetical?”

“Ay, I heard you singing—love songs—I infer.”

“Ay, just love songs. What for not? I was singing the truth, and there’s nothing so poetical as the truth.”

“What are you saying? You know well that truth and poetry are far-off acquaintances.”

“*Tut*, father! Take, for instance, King David’s poetry. No finer was ever written, and all because it is the evendown truth. Good poetry is always true.”

“I have not the time to refute you now. I’ll set

you straight some other hour;" and he went dourly forward. But when he was a little further down the hill, he heard a faint, and fainter echo of the words he knew so well—

"I loved ne'er a laddie but one,
He loved ne'er a lassie but me;
He's willing to make me his own,
And his own I am willing to be."

And with his stick he struck to the ground a bunch of nettles he was passing, muttering as he did so, "I'm feared there's mair truth than poetry in that old song—it is a troublesome world—What for are we wanting organs?—there's no comfort in an organ. I'll just vote against it."

CHAPTER TWO

ANNIE'S ENGAGEMENT

WHEN the song was finished Annie stood as still as if she was listening for its echo. Perhaps she was. Also, the silent spaces of the Spring evening—embalmed in perfume of wallflowers—was wonderfully alluring. The bat's fine cry, almost too fine for common ears, was all the landward sound audible; but on the beach below, the waves were coming up among the pebbles with a lively cadence. She was about to go into the house when she heard a step and a voice that made her heart ring to the tune they set. For she had been expecting Roy Morrison. She felt sure that he would throw up every engagement, in order to come and clear himself in her eyes. If he did not, she was prepared to count his delay against him. But Roy was going to come up to her expectation, and she glowed and beamed with satisfaction, as she stood leaning on the old wall watching his approach.

"Now I shall have the truth, and the whole truth," she mused; "and things aren't going one bit farther between us until I get it."

The next moment Roy saw her, as if shining in

the dim twilight; a little white scarf across her shoulders, and a white bow at her throat. And he waved his cap above his head, and came forward as rapidly as the ascent permitted. He was a dark, slim youth; much sunburned, with curling hair, splendid teeth, and a voice that might wile a bird from a tree. But manner is the physiognomy of the mind, and a finer index to the character than the face. And Roy's manner was not an assuring one. Women generally accepted him at his own valuation, and he appeared guileless to them; but men saw that he never did anything without reflecting whether he had better do it. He was full of small alluring faults, that women defended and even forgave; but men made a clearer estimate of their reason and tendencies, and therefore in spite of his *ha! ha!* manner, they judged him to be selfish and untruthful, and that without any moral disquietude.

"His faults are in the grain o' his nature, and what will you do, when that is the case?" asked an old fisherman of a little company discussing Roy. "There's no moral or spiritual atmosphere about the lad, so then it stands to reason, people feel uncomfortable wi' him."

"Right, Campbell, you are perfectly right there," answered an old schoolmate of Roy's; "in a theological sense, he seems incapable o' grace."

"I'm not so sure o' that," interrupted a young fisher. "I lay it doon as a fundamental principle, that if a good woman takes up wi' a man, there's good somewhere in that man. And when a man loves a good woman, you needna put him down as clean outside, and beyond the grace o' God. Now, Annie Brodick is setting Roy above all the men she knows, and Roy is spelling Life with one word, and that word is, Annie. I'd put them two facts together, and give Roy the benefit o' them."

"Surely," answered Campbell. "Give the lad fair play, but if any o' you are thinking o' making a friend o' Roy Morrison, I would advise you to get acquaint wi' him, as carefully as you did wi' your first razor—and then, I'm feared you'll find in the end, the usual accident wi' razors has befallen you."

This conversation represented fairly enough the divided opinion about the young man; but Annie heard little of the village gossip. Her position as Robert Brodick's heiress, and the superior education she had received, set her apart from the ordinary fisher or farm girl. And Annie knew her advantages, and was well inclined to take them at their full value. She had always listened with scorn to the innuendoes against Roy coming from the village, and even her

father's story of the painting out of her own name, did not strike her as a likely one.

"Roy is a prudent man about his own welfare," she reflected, "far too prudent to risk the loss o' my love, and my hand, for a bit of spite like yon—and against his own brother, too. I'm not believing a word o' such an unlikely tale. I shall ask him plainly about the matter this very hour, and he'll give me the negative, straight and strong, no doubt o' that."

And when Roy stood at her side, and throwing his arms around her, cried with the passionate hurry of love, "Annie, Annie, my beauty! My darling Annie! come down to the water side, and have a walk and a talk with me!" she had not a shadow of doubt concerning Roy's innocence left. Then she grew suddenly ten times lovelier. The ancient ecstasies of youth and love filled her heart, and it throbbed like a hive in June:—

"I would like to walk down to the water, Roy," she answered, "but father has gone to a Kirk meeting, and he does not care to have the house left to the servant lass."

"I'm glad the auld man is out, my beauty! If he was here, he would be sure to say 'You can't go, Annie; it is too late, and near the exercise'; or, 'There's a fog coming from the east,' or the like o'

that. Take your ain leave for once. You arena a bairn now."

"Ay, but I am. I'm father's bairn, always."

Then they sat down together on the garden wall, and after a while Roy asked, "What time will the auld man be back?"

"Do not speak of father in that way," answered Annie. "I'm not liking it. Father is not old. He can do as big a day's work yet as any man in Arran; and he has neither sign nor feel of old age; God forever bless him!"

"I am meaning no harm, Annie. But I don't forget that he was speaking very sharp to me, a few days syne—and I can tell you, I'm not liking that. But for you, my dearie, I would have given him as good as he sent."

"Whatever were you saying, Roy, to make father sharp with you?"

"I was just saying a few words to Will Sennex about Mattie Robinson, and her lovers. The lass is a very butterfly o' vanity and conceit, and any lad that will flatter her can——"

"Roy, I'm not caring to hear about Mattie Robinson. It is few people know her well enough to judge her."

"Maybe, but there is not a man or woman between here and Inachar that does not ken how poor Archie

Lagg is treated by that wife o' his. Whiles, she won't let him go into his ain kitchen—'Oot o' here, Archie Lagg,' she cries; 'the kitchen isna a man-body's parish.' No wonder the man is driven to Lucky Laird's public. But that isn't the worst o' the creature, she won't go to the Kirk her husband thinks she ought to go to. She tells him she can think for herself."

"How can she have the presumption?" asked Annie with a dubious little laugh, whose mocking character Roy did not notice. "Jenny Lagg must have got fairly beyond herself; Saint Paul would never have believed such a woman within the possibilities."

"Indeed he would not," answered the unsuspecting young man. "You know, Annie, it is the Scripture rule that women shall ask their husbands about things they are just naturally ignorant of. And I was just saying this, and that, about women in general, when the auld man—I mean your father—snapped me up wi' a very impertinent remark about my ain mother. I don't know what was in his mind, he was in a most provoking temper."

"I'll tell you what was in his mind, Roy; he was hearing something I cannot believe possible about your brother Will's boat."

"Yes, I know what you are meaning."

"Someone was saying that it was you yourself that did the deed — but I am sure that is simply unthinkable."

"Of course. Of course it is. Would I for any thing smirch the name o' the woman I love better than my own life? I would be a born fool to do it. I would think shame o' myself forever."

They had in their sauntering reached a little garden seat, and Roy sat down and drew Annie lovingly to his side. He then tried to turn the conversation, but Annie was not satisfied.

"Roy," she said, "I'm not doubting you, but nobody would believe how this report troubles me; and what I am requiring, is, that you give me the denial straight, and strong, and plain. Plenty of folk will anon bring the ill story to me, and I want to be able to speak the words for you, that you may perhaps be too proud, and too angry, to speak for yourself. So then, my dear Roy, did you paint your brother's boat-name out! Or did you not?"

"I did not do it, Annie. I never laid a finger on Will's boat. Whatever way can I make it clearer to you? I will swear it, if you want me to take God to witness an oath anent such a dirty trick."

"No, no! If I could not take your word, Roy, I would think still less o' your oath. Yes, or no, is

enough for any man to say; more is just a weakness."

"I say, No! then."

"That is all I want."

"And I'll be upsides with them that set you to question an honest man that loves you. Such a like stir and fuss to make about nothing but a few painted letters."

"Roy! Whatever are you saying?"

"I'm saying, a few painted letters, in a place where they had neither right nor reason to be. What business had Will to put your name on his boat? Somebody gave him what he deserved, and as far as Will Morrison is concerned, I'm thinking it was neither crime nor misdemeanor. I'm not going, now, into what we may call the ethics o' the circumstance."

"Keep your temper in hand, Roy. We need not discuss the ethics of the matter now, for you have said plainly you did not blacken my name."

"And I'll say more, Annie, I'll say that there will be a bad hour for whoever did do it. When I find the scoundrel, I'll give him a reminder that will last his life-days."

"If you lift your hand, with my name as reason for it, I'll never change speech with you again."

Never, Roy Morrison. You have given me all I want—a clear, straight denial. Tell me now, who do you think is the guilty person?”

“What for are you wanting to know that?”

“Because I would try to give—whoever it may be—a very decided warning. I am knowing well the look I saw on my father’s face, as he told me of the shameful bit o’ malice—the blacking out o’ my name—and my father’s name too—for you know fine his name is far beyond a stain; and there isn’t man or woman in Arran that can show a more honorable record.”

“Sure! Deacon Brodick is just perfect humanity. Every one from Lamlash to Loch Ranza, and even as far as Glasgow itsel’, has heard tell o’ the righteousness o’ Deacon Robert Brodick. What did the Deacon say?”

“He said very little. But just because he had few words, and no threats in his mouth, I know he intends to make an example of the blackguard, whoever he may be. So I would fain warn him, either to confess his fault to the Deacon, and so get his forgiveness, or else put himself out o’ the reach of his just anger. If you have a likely surmise o’ the man who was guilty of such contemptible spite, I wish you would give me his name—in confidence—Roy.”

"I think Will Morrison did the deed, with his ain hands."

"You are not knowing what you say, Roy."

"I know fine. I say Will Morrison did it his ainsel'. He thought I would get the blame o' it, and so lose your love and respect. Confound the meeserable creature!"

"You are positively mistaken, Roy. Will did not do it. I would as soon blame myself. An act like that is clean below and beyond him. The simple thought of blackening his heart and his hands in yon way, would never enter Will's mind. You fright me, Roy. You fright me. If I could believe you—*tut! tut!* the thing is impossible."

"What for will you set yourself in such a blaze o' passion? Let the black mark pass. We have sweeter things to talk about. I am asking you this minute to be my wife. I want your 'Yes.' I will not listen to 'No.' If I am right in thinking you love me, Annie, say 'Yes.' I am that anxious, I am fairly trembling with the fear you did not mean aught by the smiles you have blessed me with, and the kiss you have let me take this very night. Annie, my sweet lassie, say 'Yes.' If you don't I shall go to the mischief. I know that."

"Whist, Roy! Do you think I can be frightened

into marrying you? I am not that kind of a woman. And if I believed you were a man likely to go to the mischief, for anything that a woman might do to you, I would say a hundred-fold 'No' this very minute. But——"

"But you will trust me, 'Annie? You will love me in spite o' all my shortcomings. Oh, my bonnie Annie! give me the one word that will make me prouder than King or Kaiser. Will you be my wife, Annie?"

And love imputes no motive, sees the bright side, puts the best construction on everything; and has besides many reasons that reason does not understand. So Annie said 'Yes,' and then permitted her lover to taste the sweetness of her surrender. She allowed herself to confess that she loved him, that she had long loved him, and that she would love him, and only him, to the end of her life. And the tide came murmuring up, and the moon rose and silvered the seaward stretches, and there was a sense of dream-land in the sweet, lovely garden where they told their tale of love, and believed it to be something sacred and special to their own experience. And in that intimate ardor all inquietude was dispelled.

As the clock struck ten the Deacon opened the gate and saw the lovers sitting in the moonlight on the

seaward wall. He saw them before they were aware of his presence, and he understood their attitude of perfect confidence and affection. He knew then what he would have to hear, and he tried to prepare himself for it. If Annie was resolved to marry this man, he must at least bear his disappointment without whimpering, and with such silent dignity as befitted an officer of the Kirk.

It was, however, a bitter trial, for he found out that hour how great was his dislike for Roy Morrison, and how much he feared his influence over his daughter. Also, he felt a little hard toward Annie. She knew that Roy was most objectionable to him. She knew that he mistrusted his moral nature, and that the general feeling in the village was a prejudice against Roy Morrison, though it was hard to say on what grounds this prejudice existed. For Roy was a prompt observer of all that the little community held in respect—a constant sitter in the Kirk, and a ready helper, whenever there was any stress of extra labor. Still, for all this apparent good will, Roy did not strike the right note. And he noticed with bitter anger on what a different footing his brother Will stood.

Will made no particular efforts to please, yet everyone liked him, and had a pleasant word and smile to

give him. He had no great social qualities, no funny stories to tell, and his dancing was the dancing of a heavy man. He was shy with women, and every unmarried girl knew that he loved Annie Brodick, and was quite insensible to the charms of any other beauty. He gave no gifts but to children, who all adored him; and his sole claim to popular favor appeared to be a good, simple heart that the youngest understood, and the oldest and poorest put their trust in.

“If it had been Will Morrison!” said the father to himself—“if it had only been Will! I wouldn’t have regretted the Minister so much. I could have respected Will, and I would not have been ashamed of him among the great and honorable company of my forefathers. But Roy! Roy is different.” And the Deacon stirred the fire, and sat down full of a sad disappointment. “Life is just a battle,” he continued, “and we cannot shirk it, but, Oh, the weariness of wrestling with your own thoughts, and getting bruised in the encounter! Of being strong enough to fight and not strong enough to conquer. Ah!——”

Then the young people, who had been notified of his return home by the blaze on the hearth, came towards the house. He heard their steps, and rose

from his chair and stood waiting their approach. He knew what was going to be said, and he thought he had prepared himself for the words; yet when Roy, with the pride of a newly-engaged man, referred to Annie as his "future bride," the Deacon grimly smiled and answered—

"Weel, weel, that will do for a passing remark."

"I hope you have no objections, Deacon?" inquired the lover with a slight tone of offense at his want of appreciation.

"No, no. The circumstance is not likely to be far out o' the way," was the doubtful reply.

"I can assure you that I love Annie. She is my first love, and I would die for her."

"Nonsense, man! Only fools die for love. Wise men and women generally live to thank God that they did not get the first, foolish desire o' their hearts. We will make the exercise now—it has been waiting more than fit, on your self-seeking."

When the worship was over, Roy, who wished to conciliate, said a few words about its excellency, adding, "We are going to have a big musical reunion in the Village, Deacon. I have the charge of it, and it would be a great thing for us all, if you would take the chair."

But the Deacon shook his head, and answered

sharply—"I'll not go a footstep. A musical reunion! It is just incredible misery."

Then Roy said "Good-night." He felt hurt, though he could give no reason for the feeling, but he revenged himself by an ostentatious appropriation of Annie, and a long whispered conversation outside the door. And Annie was proud and silent when she came back to her father, whose dropped head and brooding face was a kind of reproach that irritated her.

"Roy was feeling perfectly annoyed, father," she said. "He was thinking you were not pleased with him for a son-in-law."

"I am not. The lad has some discernment, I see."

"You are not so kind as you should be, father. You are wanting me to marry that wee minister, with his scented hair, and his white hands, and his hopes of a Glasgow pulpit. I don't want him, and it is not fair, and not kind to force on me a husband I can neither love nor respect."

"My lass! It is just as unfair, and just as unkind, to force on me a son-in-law that I can neither like nor respect. The laws of the household are equal laws. There is not one law for the parent and another law for the child. But I know that love is a

clamoring selfishness, and that it will put on any disguise to get its own ends. Go to your bed, Annie Brodick, and rest and bethink yourself. You have suffered a temporary collapse o' reason. You will hold the balance truer in the morning. God be with you!"

And Annie could not go away without returning the blessing, nor yet say it, and keep her anger. So they parted as usual with a smile and a handgrip—and love has always invincible hope.

"Father is a bit disappointed," Annie said to herself, "but he'll get over it, and then he'll be just. Yes, he'll be just, whatever comes, he'll be just. That is all I am wanting, for when he knows Roy better, he will be liking him better. And I'm fairly blessed with my lad! Oh what a wonderful thing is love! I can pray for the whole world to-night. Love works miracles. It has given a new meaning to my life, and oh, Roy! my dear one! I hope that you are as happy this night as I am."

CHAPTER THREE

MRS. LOCHRIGG'S OPINIONS

HAPPY as Annie had declared herself to be, she rose in the morning with a certain depression and anxiety. For all changes to the thoughtful heart must have an air of melancholy; what we have to leave behind is part of ourselves; we are, in a measure, dying to the life we are quitting; and must do so, before we can enter fully and cheerfully on the life we are going to. And although she did not tell herself these things, she felt them. Roy had talked to her with passionate and loving eloquence of their own home, and her heart was turning to it—so much so that the home she was to leave had already lost something of its tender charm. For as she went about her household duties, she was dreaming of the pretty little floor Roy was to prepare for her in the great city of Glasgow; and of the life of perfect bliss they were to share in it; consequently her present life was the poorer for this projection of her best self continually into the future.

Still affairs went on in the Brodick cottage with

their usual peace and regularity, and the Deacon was not at once sensitive to his loss. Indeed he was far more sensitive to the annoyance which the brag and pride of his future son-in-law caused him; for Roy had won the handsomest and richest girl in the neighborhood, and he was not able to bear his success modestly. On the night of his betrothal he went straight from Annie's home to the house of his aunt, Mistress Sarah Lochrigg, for he could not rest until he told her the news.

Now Sarah Lochrigg was in her way as pronounced a character as Robert Brodick, and possessed almost as much influence in the small community. She was the only mother her nephews knew, and her pride in both boys was quite maternal in character. Although fifty years of age she was still handsome in a large way—with fine black hair, and bright black eyes, a vivid color, a tall erect figure, and a most authoritative voice and manner. For she had sailed some years with her husband, and could command his ship as well as any officer in it.

But when her sister died, leaving two infant sons, she gave up her sea life and devoted herself to the children. Before they were half grown the Captain retired, built the roomy house overlooking the sea in which she lived, and for a few years enjoyed the

quiet and repose he had well earned. Then he went solemnly and cheerfully on his last long voyage, and at the date of this story Sarah Lochrigg was a widow of ample means, for her station, and continually adding to her "dry siller" the profits of letting her spare rooms in the summer to "well-to-do Glasgow bodies" seeking health and rest in the life-giving atmosphere of beautiful Arran.

Her nephew Will lived with her, but Roy, being second officer on *The Lady Mary*, a steamer plying between Glasgow and Lamlash, lived in officers' quarters on the boat; or else in some room in the city convenient to the requirements of his duty. Now Roy knew his aunt's movements almost to an hour, for they were arranged and set beyond ordinary interference, and therefore he was certain at this particular date she was in the height and fever of her Spring cleaning. He knew also, that to Mistress Lochrigg this was an event of the greatest importance; and it was his usual policy to be busy enough on *The Lady Mary* to excuse all interference in his aunt's affairs. It was Will who at this time gave her such help as she would permit any "man-body" to render; yet she generally bemoaned Will's best efforts as "miserable make-shifts, which she perfectly thought scorn of," and which could only be

tolerated, because certain work was "over weighty for a woman on the wrong side of fifty, even though she was a very Judith in fortitude."

Yet, knowing all the circumstances and environments of Lochrigg House at that date, Roy went there, and that with a sense and air of triumph quite beyond his control. There was a light in the kitchen, and he lifted the latch and went in.

"Good-evening, Aunt!" he said cheerily.

"Good-night, you mean. It will chap eleven o'clock before long."

"Is it that late?"

"Lift your eyes, you can see for yoursel'."

"I see that you are very busy."

"Busy! I'm worn out, and done for. It has been just a weary hurry-push for the last week. Will has done his best, but——"

"But what?"

"The natural-born incapacity o' men-folk. They have neither sense nor mense about a house. They can lift a heavy bit o' furnishing, but they haven't an idea about the cleaning and polishing o' it. And as for setting it down where it properly belongs, they would be as likely to put the kitchen things in the bedrooms, and the bedrooms' things in the parlor, as in their rightful, ordained places."

"I wish I had time to help you, Aunt."

"You help me! That would be a story. You can neither help, nor hinder."

"I am glad I can't hinder you, for I want to tell you something very interesting. Can you listen to me?"

"Ay, I can—if you are in earnest. I'm not caring for 'maybe's' to-night."

"It is a crowned truth. I came here purposeful to tell you a most important, and happy thing."

"Then it is somewhat about yoursel'. If it is in the 'important's' it is concerning Royden Morrison. I count that certain."

"I've won Annie Brodick for my wife. What do you think o' that? The bonniest lass in Arran! As good as gold! With land and siller at her back! And for all a very lily o' the Kirk, and as religious as if she was born and bred for a D.D. I know I'm little worthy o' her, but she'll be a sort o' guardian angel to me."

"She'll be your master. She is one o' them New-Women kind, I hear tell. I thought she was to marry the Minister. Goodness knows he's daft about her. And he has been educating her in all sorts o' new-fangled ideas."

"She has thrown over the Minister, and taken my-

self. And I'm not afraid o' the New-Woman. In fact, I rather like her."

"I shouldn't wonder if you did. Why not? She is just an amusement—and every sensible body kens, there is usually a specimen o' the Auld Woman under every New-Woman. It only takes a bairn—an hour-old baby will do—to give the auld woman a final supremacy o'er the new one. New Women indeed! Such unbelievable nonsense! We are not requiring them. What we are needing—and that at extremities for—is New Men. The men o' this generation are poor, feckless creatures."

"Are you not pleased with my choice, Aunt? I was sure you would be delighted."

"Well, Roy, I have not made up my mind yet about Annie Brodick. She is a woman whose conversation is of the 'yes' and 'no' kind, and purely positive in all things. She'll shape your life for you, and your work, and your clothes, and your words, yes, the thoughts o' your heart. Clay in the potter's hand will be independent, compared with yourself in the hands o' Annie Brodick. Did you speak to her father?"

"I did."

"What did he say?"

"Next to nothing. He is a jealous body about his

daughter, and he is worrying Annie to marry the Minister. Annie prefers me, and we are going to be very happy, Aunt, no doubt o' that. Don't you think so?"

"If your ways o' sinning, and her ways o' sinning are the same, you will maybe sort together well enough; but if they are different, she'll soon count you a fool—and let you know it. Now I ask you to remember, that Annie Brodick is a thought miserly about money—and you, *you* are nothing but a was-tra and a spendthrift! I wish the Deacon had signified his intentions about Annie's tocher. What will he give her? What did he say on that subject?"

"I did not name the subject. He had been at a Kirk session, and was not in a suitable temper."

"You ought to have named it. And what for was there a Kirk meeting? I never heard tell o' the intent."

"You've been that throng, you have doubtless missed the notice. The Minister wants an organ."

"Organ! Then they would require to take away the Precentor's desk, and that might be displeasing to the Almighty, as well as to the auld folks. Me, and the like o' me, are used to the Precentor. I couldn't sing my psalms without him."

"Annie says, the organ is unnecessary; the choir is very good, particularly good."

"*Sure!* Annie leads the choir. For my part, I think there is too much singing, and too little preaching. Mr. Saunders has given us short weights in doctrine lately. The elders are all noticing that—and not liking it. But if you have nothing to talk about but the Kirk and Annie Brodick, I am beyond carrying on such a conversation. I am a weary woman. I would not wonder if I am a sick woman. I feel like it."

"You are bone tired, Aunt. That is all. Let me make you a good, hot glass of whiskey, and go to your bed. In the morning you will be fit as a trivet for any work."

"How daur you?"

"As medicine, Aunt. I was not meaning——"

"How daur you mention the sinful stuff to me, Roy Morrison?"

"It was just an advice."

"That will cost you more than you reckon on. Me! Sarah Lochrigg, a member o' the Women's Temperance Union! A speaker in the same! to take a glass o' hot, strong whiskey, because I'm a bit weary. It is most impertinent of you, Roy Morrison, to propose the like to me. If you had any glimmering sense o' my responsibility, and influence, or I may say o' the power o' my eloquence, you would have been present at our last week's meeting, when

"I was suffering very much, father."

"But you might have called up the lass if you were not able to put things as they ought to be."

"Father, I had all I could do to reach my room."

"Can I get you anything?"

"I have all I want, father. I know well what to do when I am in trouble of any kind."

"Weel, if you get no better, call me, and I'll go for the medical man; though Doctor McFarlane is fearsome angry if he is called at night—and charging for it, too."

"I'm not requiring McFarlane. I'll do better wanting him. Just leave me to myself, father. I'll be fit enough by morning."

"God help and bless you, Annie!"

He went away with the blessing on his lips, and then returned to the house-place, and began to look around for his usual bread and cheese and glass of milk. Annie had forgotten them. "It is easy to say who has been here," he muttered. "Only Roy Morrison could make her forget me, and it is most humiliating to be put o' mind for the like o' that ne'er-do-well. And if I am any judge o' women-folk, there has been a quarrel between him and Annie—and the poor lass is heart and soul sick. That is the way o' this business. I am seeing it

all clearly, ay, and feeling it likewise—a month or two on the treadmill would be a good thing for the lazy, lying scoundrel. God forgive me! I'm making myself jury and judge baith. Keep your castle, Robert Brodick! There's an enemy at your gates."

These sentiments, mingled with verses of warning and encouragement, disciplined the angry father until he fell asleep under their influence, and his soul went to that lowest chamber of being in which there is always a romance and a mystery—the wonderful mystery of dreams—the unfolding and the enlightenment of which cannot come in any other way, because for it, words—however wise—would be impotent things.

So the man slept, while his nobler part was in the School of Dreams, and the woman sat tearless and dumb with hands clasped upon her knees. There was no thought of sleep in Annie's eyes, they were fixed and wide open, and without the shadow of tears. She was not a girl ready to weep. She hardly remembered any occasion when she had done so. A kind of Spartan self-control had been the law of her childhood, and even at this bitter hour she sought not the relief of tears. Neither did the oppression on her heart drive her into restlessness and movement; she could not, as many do, walk with sorrow

up? I am thinking too, about your brother Will. He loves the girl, that you have taken from him."

"Annie would never have looked at Will for a husband."

"I would not say, but what she is likely to do worse."

"If you are going to begin about Will, it is time I went."

"I was hearing this afternoon a queer story about Will's boat, it is too late to take up the subject now. Come to-morrow and clear yourself."

"I will"—and then he went to her side, and looked down into her eyes, and said "how black and bonnie they were, and how full of love," and she shook her head, and then smilingly declared—"I have not another minute to spare for such a fleeching, flattering lad," and Roy kissed her and asked, "Won't you bid me good-night, Aunt?" and she answered with a grave tenderness—"God be with you, Roy, and good-night, my dear lad."

As soon as the door was shut behind him, she rose and locked it, and lit her night lamp. Then lifting the black tea pot, she drank a cup full from it, with an air at once defensive and determined.

"Thank God for a cup of good tea!" she said, and then as she undressed herself, she audibly re-

flected—"it is the curse of women that when they have to choose between two ways, or two things, or two persons, they are sure to choose the one worst for them. Poor Will! the girl must be a born idiot—but a bad husband, of some kind or other, is doubtless the discipline best for most women. *Them above* know—Poor Will, he fairly worships her!—I wonder if Roy loves the lass—or her tocher—or if he is simply set on getting ahead of his brother?"

At first it appeared impossible to doubt Roy's love for his affianced bride. A man so enamored, so transported with love, no one had ever seen before; and the married men and their wives shook their heads at his noisy happiness, and predicted that such hot love would soon be cold. It certainly soon became subject to moods, which troubled Annie's nature to its depths. For as the young man grew accustomed to his good fortune, he began to find flaws in it. For instance, the Deacon was a standing grievance. He generally felt his presence to be a wrong to Annie and himself. It was true, that the father was only sitting on his own hearthstone, but Roy wished him far away. He said "The auld man had no consideration for other folk"; and of course, if the nights were chill or wet, the offense was aggravated.—"There is no pleasing your father," he said

to Annie, and Annie—though understanding and excusing her father—was anxious and unhappy at the want of harmony between him and her lover.

For Roy could not make Brodick laugh at his funny stories, or take the slightest interest in his mimicries, or comical recitations; and he wondered at his daughter's toleration of this side of her lover's character. In the first place, laughter was not natural to Brodick, he took life too seriously to make sport out of it. In the second place, he had that contempt for mimicry and punning, which all but the most elemental people feel; and he was sure Annie's fine nature and intellect was subjected to deterioration in such companionship. There was no obvious quarrel, but no disagreement is so intolerable as that divided from union by only a semi-tone. It is a far deeper and more intense dislike, than one which explains itself in a vigorous dispute, or contradiction.

To be constantly between these two opposite natures, and made to feel the fret of both, was not a good discipline in any form for Annie. She was nervous and fearful when her father and lover were together. Her father's house had lost all its old placid, cheerful charm; and she longed for her own home. Brodick divined this feeling, and it hurt him like a festering wound. But Roy, cosy and cocky in

his own good opinion, failed entirely to see that his cracks and quips, and riddles and poetical recitations, made the Deacon uncomfortable, not to say resentful. Even Annie's cool sympathy, and dubious remarks were ineffectual, to curb the young man's exhibitions of supposed cleverness.

"Father is not liking your stories and songs, Roy," said Annie to her lover, one night, when his efforts to impress or amuse the Deacon had been a signal failure.

"I would like to know what would please him, Annie," was the answer. "I am sure, the best o' good company are always delighted with my stories, and the like. Captain Laird himself was saying often, that I was the life o' the boat, and I can tell you, there's few men as welcome in a smoking room as Roy Morrison."

"My father is a kirk man, not a smoking-room man. There is a difference, Roy. But if you really want to please him, you will bring forward, plain and honest, the story of the painting out o' our name on your brother's boat. You have never once given him the denial he is expecting—and has a right to."

"He has no more right to ask a denial from me, than from any other man in the village."

"He has. I'm telling you, father is rightly look-

ing for your discussion and denial of that black business. He thinks your daffing and laughing and joking is just a put-by of what you ought to be telling him."

"*Dod!* The man has taken a scunner at me. He walks by me as if I was dirt under his feet. Thank goodness! we will be having our own home soon. Why isn't he speaking to me about it? That is what I want to know."

"Because it is your place to speak to him, and I say plainly, Roy, I have long been expecting you would do so."

Whether it was Roy's place or not, the Deacon would have spoken, if he had felt any surety that a home for his daughter and Roy Morrison would ever be required. The subject was frequently in his mind, but all his thoughts and plans in that direction were brought to a standstill by an inner dissent not to be gainsaid. "Not yet; not yet!" said his soul within him, and he could not disobey the admonition of a Power, that had never deceived or betrayed him. He was to wait, and he was willing to wait, for sooner or later, he was sure Annie's clear, truthful nature would detect the falseness of the man she had chosen—and then Robert Brodick knew well, it would be simply impossible for her to marry him.

But for three months Roy kept his power and position intact. Annie believed in him with all her soul, and loved him with the intense affection of a self-restrained truthful woman. No one could doubt her affection, it had the charm of absolute sincerity and of truthfulness without a flaw. But such an atmosphere was naturally too tiresome an endeavor for a man mingled of exactly diverse elements, and gradually Annie was aware of some change too slight for analysis, too elusive to complain of, but

“Ah! the little more, and how much of it is;
And the little less, and what worlds away!”

The change was the little less, and it made Annie's heart quake as she looked into the future; for if a man is not noble and unselfish when he is in love, he never will be so, either in this life or the next; and Annie could neither disguise, nor complain away, many a small occurrence which no noble or unselfish man would have been guilty of. Every incident of this kind made a distinct impression on her, but she told herself that no one was perfect, and that when she was his wife, and had him always in her care, he would come to see things in the light of her eyes, and the wisdom of her judgment. Alas! Alas! a woman in love tells many a lie to herself, and that

old, old heartache of the world showed Annie no favor—he had already begun to give her misgivings hard to control, that mixed themselves with her day's duties, and crossed the hours of her sleep and dreams—

“For Oh, how easily things go wrong,
A sigh, a kiss, or a frown too long,
And there follows a mist and a weeping rain,
And life is never the same again!”

Bertha Riley

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DEACON IS REPROVED

As time went on the incident of the painted-out name on Will Morrison's boat appeared to be forgotten. Many reasons put it out of general discussion—the Summer season opened in less than a month after the event, and every one was fully occupied with duties pertaining to the arrival of a large number of strangers, who had to be accommodated, for the most part, in the homes of the resident population. Any woman walking through the little town would have known that such an universal display of shining windows, and snowy lace curtains, and pipe-clayed doorsteps, and trim lawns and flower gardens presupposed a month's steady scrubbing and polishing. And when men have the discomfort of tossed-up homes, and uncertain meals, and women live with bare arms, and kilted petticoats, neither of them are much inclined to discuss their neighbors, or any event concerning them, unless it also concerned the great event of the year, the number and quality of boarders at every house.

But from the first, two of the most important

people in the town had set their faces against any conversation about the Morrison affair, and to carry it on in opposition to their wishes, contained possibilities few cared to meet. The Minister pointedly ignored the subject. He had no opinion to give the public, in fact, the stricter sort thought his indifference almost sinful. For when pinned down by the senior Elder with a direct question, he smiled rather scornfully and "thought it likely the whole matter was just a foolish prank of mischievous boys, out for what they considered fun."

No one, however, gave him credit for this peace-making suggestion. All were sure he hated the subject, because he hated to hear Annie Brodick's name in open, and not very creditable, conversation.

"He is far gone in love with the lass," said Elder Ruthven, "and the Lord knows we have all been in that state oursel's at some time or other—and I am not wondering at him trying to keep Annie Brodick's name out o' every dirty mouth."

"Ay, but the sin, the sin, Elder! I am thinking the Minister ought to have brought forward the sinfulness o' the deed—even in the pulpit. Yes, yes, even in the pulpit."

"Maybe it was more mischief than sin, MacFarlane."

"It wasn't a right thing to do, Ruthven; and what is not right, is simply wrong. There are no half-sins, to my thinking."

"You are extraordinary strict in your principles, MacFarlane. I am not denying that you are right. Weel, weel, the truth is sure to tell itself some day, some way, and it is good sense to wait for it. I'll be going, friends. *Od!* it is wonderful, the way time flies in good company."

But even more effectual than the Minister's disapproval, was the more outspoken anger of Mistress Lochrigg—at least in the social view of the case. It was Mistress Lochrigg who had supplied the Minister with that pawky plan of shifting the blame from some ill-willed person to the more difficult culprit, a lot of mischievous boys out for what they considered fun. She knew that this shifting of responsibility from one to many, took away from the offense all the piquant flavor of personality. Blame divided is not interesting; even a cat would prefer the worrying of one mouse to the distracting chase of half-a-dozen.

This diversion, and dissipation of interest, was a clever move, and it was supplemented by words—which, coming from Sarah Lochrigg, were not to be misunderstood. For the day after the outrage had

been discovered, she came across a group of women in the grocery store discussing it. Their eager voices, interruptions, and explanations, and the sudden conscious silence which followed her entrance, made her sure of it.

“You may weel shut your mouths, the whole lot o’ you,” she said. Her face was white, her voice low and even, but its tones were as if she had dipped every word in aqua fortis. And her eyes! Nothing but absolute righteousness could have borne them unflinchingly. She was the incarnation of calm, contemptuous anger. “If one of you,” she continued, “but wag your tongue against me, or mine, I’ll have a price set on every ill word, and I’ll make you pay it, in siller or prison labor, every bawbee of it.”

“The Ladies, Mrs. Lochrigg—” interrupted the grocer.

“The Ladies, Mr. Hall, may talk about their ladyships; they are free o’ themselves—but they must leave my lads alone; and they might do the will o’ God, and look a little better after their own.” Then facing “the Ladies”—“Mattie Caird, your Tommy was drunk last Sabbath, and made a disgrace of himself in the very boundaries o’ the kirk. Jenny Black, your Ringan was turned awa’ from the Castle last Monday morn—you ken what for.”

“What for? What for, Mistress Lochrigg? I daur you to say what for.”

“Do you think I’ll say the word, you huzzy? You ken fine what for. Go home and look after your house—and I would wash the floor o’ it, now and again, if I was you.”

“I’ll just tell you, Mistress Lochrigg——”

“You will tell me nothing—nothing at all. If I get one word from you, I will turn you out o’ your dirty house, and roup the things in it, for the sum o’ rent you are owing me.” Then facing the whole company she said, with a quietness almost frightsome—“If I hear tell of any one o’ you, or of any other man or woman, speaking of my lads, or their boats, or of aught they say, or do, I will make strict inquiry about the same. You ken what Sarah Lochrigg means by thae few words—Sandy Brock, you will send to my house before the clock chaps eleven three pounds o’ powdered butter, and a Yorkshire ham weighing sixteen pounds, or thereabouts, and a kippered salmon, and three bunches o’ asparagus, and a peck o’ peas—fresh gathered, see to that—and four boxes o’ strawberries——”

“I’m sorry, Mistress Lochrigg, but the berries I cannot——”

“You can, and you will send them, Sandy. They

are important, and I am knowing you got twelve baskets from the Castle not two hours ago. So you'll send the full order, Sir; and I will be much obliged. . . . Good-morning, Ladies!" and with a haughty indifference, to which her large beauty gave dignity and meaning, she left the Ladies to continue their conversation, if they wished to.

But the grocer was by this time out of the mood for gossip. He gave each what they wanted without an unnecessary word, and when the last customer had disappeared, he went to his wife, and after describing Mistress Lochrigg's temper as "enough to fright the deil" he bade her "know nothing, and say nothing, and look nothing anent thae weary Morrison lads. If you do," he added, "my lady will send us to the right about, and her yearly bill is of some consequence. *Dod!* but she's the domineering woman!"

"Ay, Sandy," answered Mrs. Brock, "you canna thwart her in any particular. You be to let her set up the golden image o' her special orders. The woman would fly in the very face o' Providence, if Providence stood in her way. She would that!"

It will be seen, then, that under such repressive circumstances Brodick was likely to find the "sifting of the facts" which he had promised Annie and

himself, a rather difficult undertaking. But he was not a man to be daunted by difficulties of any kind, and he also possessed that invincible patience which is in itself a surety of success.

"Sooner or later," he constantly reminded himself, "sooner or later, the right bowl comes to the hand open and ready for it."

So he went his usual silent, kindly way, and no one suspected that his eyes and ears were both attent for any thread which would unravel the mystery. Nor was he actuated by his personal dislike of Roy, a personal dislike would not have moved him. It would have been regarded as a temptation, and in its finality been put irrevocably behind him. He knew this, because now that anger was past and reason in control, he shrank from injuring Roy publicly. He wanted only Roy's confession to Annie. For in his soul he believed the young man guilty, and how could he trust his daughter with a husband capable of such a contemptible act, and of the uncountable lies with which he had tried to conceal it.

But of this intended Nemesis there was no evidence. Even Annie thought her father had forgotten the insult, and with a woman's unreason she often said some scornful words to her own heart about his indifference to the honor of the name of Brodick,

and then again, she resented angrily any mention of the circumstance, or any proposed investigation of it. For deep down in her inmost nature—deeper than she dared to look—there was a darkness, and in the darkness a doubt, and the doubt fluttered eagerly to name itself. She felt the trembling in her breast, made by the invisible suspicion, and she was determined neither to face, nor to interrogate it. For at this time, she was constantly telling herself, how much nobler, both in words and deeds, Roy had lately been. Thus she was nursing a plea for Roy, and justifying her own attitude. However, Annie had much of her father's temperament, she could keep silence, and she could keep her own secrets, a wonderful thing for a woman to do.

Thus, this little troubling under-current was not permitted to disturb the placid stream of Summer life in the lovely town. The days went by in a Midsummer Dream of love and content. The grey old house with its far-back look and antique homeliness was brightened by a sunshine that went to hearts of men, and the root of every tree and flower, and green thing. There were boxes of mignonette in every window, and a lavender bed along the southern border of the garden. Roses sweetened June, and the virgin lilies—clad in the lawn of naked light—

filled the silent spaces of the Summer nights with radiance and perfume. The ancient wall was covered with vines, and the old, old well—from which men had drunk for five hundred years—was green with moss, and shaded by nodding ferns, and sweet with gadding violets.

The sound of running water was everywhere. The bees murmured among the flowers, or drowsed on the slopes; the nightingales and throstles sang in the thick woods, and the doves ricketty-cooed on the barn roofs. And if you went up the hills, there were the solemn shades of the pine woods, and the golden blaze of the broom, and wonderful little dells, so green and cool, you could not wonder if told they were resting places for angels. And the great sea circled the land, and hills rose beyond hills from blue to grey, till they were faint and lost in the misty Highland sky.

In such a Summer land it was easy to believe all Love's sweetest tales, and Annie took whatever Roy said into her heart, and nursed his words there to songs and dreams of future happiness. And in this life of pleasant illusions she grew so lovely, that her father wondered at the change, and felt every day more bitterly the apparent wastrie of her womanly gifts and charms.

"But it isn't the hour to speak yet," he mused, "though God knows, it is hard for me to thole Roy Morrison's ways. If he was Lord John_o' the Highlands, he couldn't put on more airs. A stranger would be sure that he owned not only my Annie, but my house and land, and all he could cast his glowering black eyes over. As for mysel', I am out of all consideration, ay, am I!—wi' both o' them. God help me to keep a still mouth, and my hands down at my side. There's none else able for the job."

Perhaps the old should remember that they too have been in Arcadia, and should greet the young as they pass into the Enchanted Land with a smile of sympathy, make excuses for unwonted selfishness, and pardon humiliating neglect. Many do so. Many more have never seen Arcadia, even from the Delectable Mountains. Others have tarried there so short a time, that its memory comes back to them as "only a dream." Perhaps Robert Brodick was among the latter class, for if he had ever been in Arcadia, he had forgotten. His love for his wife had been of the quality of his nature, strong and sincere. He had said to her, "Grace Scott, I love you, and I would like with all my heart to make you my wife." And Grace had answered, "Weel, Robert, I might do worse than yoursel'. I'm willing enough

to marry you." Then the date had been set, and the wedding ring fit, and they had stood up before the Minister. That was all. So to Brodick's apprehension, the enthusiasms of Roy, and the dreamy wistfulness of his hitherto all-there daughter, were symptoms of a foolish love sickness sensible people ought to be ashamed to acknowledge.

One fine morning in June, Brodick resolved to go to a little tarn he knew, and get a few trout. He really longed for the peace of the lonely places, and the fellowship of the hills; for it is in the wilderness—and not in contact with men—that the soul recalls all its straying energies, and renews its strength. So he said to Annie, "I'll away to the Tarrant Tarn, and spend a few hours wi' the trout to-day, Annie. Maybe I'll bring you a few pounders home wi' me,

"'For where the pools are bright and deep,
There the grey trout lies asleep.'"

He quoted the lines quite naturally, they were part of his usual preparation for a day's fishing. And it was quite in course that Annie should reply,

"'But when the wind is from the north,
The wily fisher goes not forth.'"

So you had best question the wind, father."

Then Brodick went to the open door and looked

east and west and north and south for a sign of the wind's mood. "I'll trust the wind to-day," he said. "There may be a plump of rain in the afternoon, but it will get o'er by in half-an-hour." He ate his breakfast in a kind of happy hurry, and then trudged off to the mountains with his rod, a good supply of flies, red spinners, zulus, etc., and a can of cold tea, and some buttered scones for his lunch. He was really going for solitude, not for trout, so we will not intrude upon a day which he found to be full of the presence of God. A few fish, however, rewarded his half-hearted efforts, for when he reached the tarn there was a good ripple on the water, and the day was cloudy, but the wind quickly veered to the north, and he smiled at his memory of the old saying, and allowed "it was true enough to guide those who wanted the truth."

As soon as the sun was visibly westering he turned home, full of the spirit of the hills, and lonely, unplanted places. His broad calm face was shining with inward peace, his strong, almost joyful steps indicated a soul at one with some Presence diviner than himself; but he soon descended to that level whereon humanity dwells, and became aware of the feverish contact of mortal beings. For passing a small cottage on his way home, he saw Mistress

Lochrigg coming out of it. Curiosity was at once to the fore; he began to speculate as to her purpose in being there, and was not sorry when she waited for his approach and said,

"Good-evening, Deacon Brodick. I am going your 'way, if you will convoy me hame. I can see the speculation in your face; why don't you speir what for I was at Timothy Buchan's?"

"Well then, I am speiring now. What's wrong with Tim Buchan?"

"Most everything. He has a fever—typhoid—or I am much mistaken, and his wife has a bairn not two weeks old, and the eldest girl is but eight years old, and there are two or three sickly weans between her and the new born. And the whole lot o' them are worn to skin and bone wi' hunger, and care, or pure pain itsel'. I heard tell o' their miserable condition an hour ago, and I made haste to see what I could do to help them."

"You are a good woman, Sarah. Wait for me a wee. I'll do my share now, and it will be the welcomer." Then back he went to the cottage and entered it. A woman with a baby in her arms was sitting beside an apparently dying man. "Jean Buchan," he said, "put care outside your door. Trust to God, and Robert Brodick. Make your

Timothy understand, if so be you can, that Robert Brodick will stand for him and his family, until he can do his day's work again."

He hardly heard the poor woman's cry of gratitude, he went so quickly from the cottage, but Sarah was out of sight. "The silly, proud hizzy! she has taken offense at my leaving her. Women are wonderful queer creatures. She wanted me to help Tim Buchan and yet—" He shrugged his shoulders to express something so complex, he felt it impossible of explanation by any formula of words. But his long, firm strides soon brought him to the side of the huffy woman.

"I did what I know you wanted me to do, Sarah," he said, "and I am thankful to you for putting me in the way of such a good deed. *Od*, woman! I wonder however you find the time to do all you do—baith inside and outside your ain house. It's simply wonderful."

"I can find time, however throng I am, for a work o' mercy; that is neither more nor less than serving God before man."

"I know, Sarah, but you——"

"I ken your fleeching way, Deacon, but it isn't of mysel' I wanted to talk to you. It is about those dear to both o' us. My house is now near by; will you

come in and have a cup o' tea with me, and we can talk as we drink? I have some plain words for you, and doubtless you will be ready and willing to give me back what I send—but over a cup o' tea, we are not likely to say anything beyond good-will, or at least, ordinar civility."

"There is nothing on earth could make me quarrel with you, Sarah. It would be like quarrelling with the dead. You and my wife were closer and dearer than sisters. You made her dying bed easier for more than a year, and when she flitted away, it was out o' your arms she went. Do you think anything you could say would make me forget what you did? No, no, Sarah."

"Well, then, Robert, come your ways in, and we'll have a reasonable talk o'er a cup o' Young Hyson—and you may give me half-a-dozen o' them wee grey trout, and I'll make them a bonnie brown in the frying pan. I am gey fond o' mountain fish."

So the Deacon went in with his old friend, and while she set the table, and buttered the hot scones, and turned the grey fish to a golden brown, Robert washed his hands and face, and taking a little comb from his waistcoat pocket, combed out his thick brown hair, carefully parting it on the right side, as

his mother had taught him, because the right side o' anything, was the lucky side.

"My goodness, Sarah!" he ejaculated, as he drew in his chair to the table—"it is a fine thing to go up to the mountains, and come down with a domineering hunger, and get a ravishing meal set for you by the woman you're respecting above all others."

"Now, Robert, I'm not saying but what your compliments are pleasant enough, but at the present hour, I want you to talk business; so we'll let the compliments go by, till they have their own hour. It is my question first, and I am asking you plainly, why you did not come and tell me about your Annie engaging hersel' to my nephew Roy?"

"Sarah, why did you not come and tell me about your nephew engaging himsel' to my Annie?"

"It was your place, Robert, to speak first."

"Nay, it was yours."

"Well, we won't argue that point. Are you pleased with the contracting?"

"No."

"Why?"

"I have never been able to make myself believe in it. That is the 'why' of my silence."

"You are not wanting to believe in it."

"Perhaps—if it had been Will——"

"Will! Will! Of course Will! Will is safe and sure, and his wife may put by care like an old dress she'll never need to wear again. There would be little need of the 'for better or worse' promise, if it was Will; but no doubt you are thinking a wife might have her share o' heartaches wi' Roy Morrison."

"Exactly—just so. Not only 'might,' she could count on them without a doubt."

"Annie can make a man o' Roy. He has some shortcomings now, I'm not denying the same, but Annie could laugh away his bit follies, and strengthen his heart."

"Exactly, and break her ain heart, and weep her life away in the doing o' it, Sarah. I am loving my daughter Annie."

"Weel, Robert, I must say you don't act like it. You are a perfect penure, a very Nabal o' a father."

"Sarah Lochrigg, what are you saying? Do you remember who you are talking to?"

"I know well who I am talking to, and though you be a Deacon in the Kirk, I will say it again."

"You are not requiring to do anything o' the kind. I'll not be likely to forget your words. But I wish you would give me some proof of their truthfulness."

"I'll do it. I want to do it. That is the why and the wherefore of my asking you into my house—pass your cup, Deacon—I see it is empty."

"It is the best tea I have had for a long while. I wish I could have a few better words with it."

"You'll get the better ones after the ill ones. The latter have to come first."

"Then give me them instanter. What miserly things have I been doing to Annie?"

"Man Robert! Did you ever hear tell of a father—that had plenty o' lying siller, ye ken—letting his daughter make her wedding clothes out o' the garments left her by her dead mother? It is a shame, Robert, a black shame."

"My God! I don't believe it. You are just hurting me. I'm not understanding, Sarah."

"I know! I want to make you understand! Roy told me distinctly that you had never given Annie one bawbee for her wedding clothes, and that she was making her kirking dress out o' one of her mother's old dresses, and he was supposing he would be called on to buy the wedding dress itsel', because Annie said she would never ask it from you, seeing that you were so set against her marriage."

"Roy Morrison will never, never, be called upon to buy Annie Brodick's wedding dress. I'll vow

that with crossed hands. He has not given her an engagement ring yet."

"I am talking of the wedding garments. Well you know if the village get hold of such a story, it might come—in your position—to be a Kirk inquiry."

"Sarah! Sarah! It is all a mistake."

"Maybe it is, maybe it is not. If Annie had been going to marry the Minister, I think you would have minded yourself of the necessary outfit. I'm pretty sure you would."

"You are a searching woman. Maybe I would. But this fault, thanks to you, is not past mending. I'll see to it this same night. I am thanking you, also, for the plain words you have said to me; they are dutiful; I'll attend to them."

"The wounds of a friend—you know, Robert."

"I know. If I see my duty, I am neither dull nor hesitating about the uptake o' it."

"Well, then, what about a home for the young things? They be to have some place to lay their heads."

"That is not my business. No man has a right to marry till he has made a home for his wife."

"Roy has but a small salary."

"Yet he daured to come seeking Annie Brodick."

I thought from that circumstance, he was paid well enough to keep a wife in comfort. I'm fairly amazed at the man's presumption."

"Deacon, you know well that Love will venture in without asking whether he is welcome or not. What will you do about furnishing a home, if I pay the rent for a year?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all."

"In another year, Roy will maybe have a larger salary, and then——"

"Sarah, I cannot abide such words as 'maybe,' 'perhaps,' and 'likely.' They are wicked, wasteful guideposts to ruin of some kind or other. If Roy really loved Annie, he would have been saving his money to furnish a home for her. Anyway, Sarah, I will not do it for him."

"Folks are expecting——"

"Let them expect."

"There is another thing, Robert. If you do nothing for Roy, it is as good as saying you have no confidence in him. That will hurt the lad."

"I have no confidence in him. That is the truth."

"People may even say that you are believing that silly report about Annie's name on Will's boat."

"Sarah, I am believing it. Don't cry, woman."

"Oh, Robert, how can you?"

"It was hard to do, but I had that witness within that never yet deceived me."

"And if you believe such a mean, cowardly thing of the lad, however can you let him marry your daughter?"

"I do not let him. I cannot let him, nor can I hinder. Both God and men let many things happen they don't will to happen—far from it. Annie has made up her mind, and her mind is as dour and stiff as your own, or mine. Nobody but Roy himself can prevent her marrying Roy."

"He will never prevent her. He loves her. How could he prevent the marriage? It isna possible."

"One way only—let Roy Morrison do a single wrong that he cannot explain away—that he cannot sneak out of—that he is obliged to confess—and Annie would——"

"Forgive him."

"She would not. The girl is so compounded of truth and honor and honesty, she could not forgive him. These virtues are herself. Whoever betrayed one of them, would be betraying her. To put him away would be the plucking out o' the right eye, but it would be plucked out. Forgive, ay, she might, for Christ's sake, but she would bid him good-bye forever, with the forgiving words on her lips. What

for? Because she would have ceased to love him. I know. I know Annie by myself."

"Then what are you going to do?" As she asked this question she laid another fish on the Deacon's plate, and refilled his cup. "What are you going to do about the whole matter?"

"I am going to give Annie fifty pounds to-night for her clothes—they will be hers anyway. Is that enough?"

"I would add twenty-five pounds for the wedding dress."

"I will—when the wedding is certain."

"Losh, man! You are an unbelieving creature."

"Is that all you wanted with me, Sarah?"

"At present."

"Then we will drop the subject. Do you know that Mr. Saunders is leaving us on Friday?"

"Never!"

"He is. There is a young man coming here, not so very long out o' the Divinity classes. He'll bein' knowing everything, of course."

"And where is Mr. Saunders going?"

"To fill St. Mark's pulpit, Glasgo'. Think o' that."

"I have more profitable thoughts. How did you get this young Divinity lad for our Kirk?"

"He has been working among the soldiers in Edinburgh—and he has made a grand record for himself. I was hearing tell that our Duke—no less—spoke to Elder Ruthven about him. The Duke said he had heard him talking to the soldiers, till he had their hearts in his hand."

"And what kin will he be to the Duke?"

"None."

"Then what for was the Duke trying to place him?"

"Naturally, he wanted a good man in his own town. Elder Ruthven went to Edinburgh, and heard him preach, and at the long end got him to come here for the season. He wasn't carin' to come."

"Why not? Were we not rich enough, or good enough for him?"

"He was feared we were too good—too respectable. He is for looking after the sinners."

Mistress Lochrigg laughed scornfully. "With such lads as my Roy is thought to be," she said, "and with Glasgo' trippers, roaring full o' whiskey, and Glasgo' boarders, trying to cheat you out o' every bawbee not signed and sealed for, he'll find sinners enough, I'll warrant, to keep him busy. What is the name o' the man?"

"James Alexander Archibald Crieff."

"Then he'll be a Hielandman?"

"More than likely. He's a born fighter—all Hielandmen are that, but he is wanting spiritual battles, and spiritual victories."

"I know them kind, Robert. The Salvation Army crowd belong to them. I wouldn't wonder if the names o' the Glasgow contingent was taken if nine-tenths o' them were 'Macs' o' some clan or other."

"You are wrong there, Sarah. It was the Hieland host, led by Chalmers, that gave us the Free Kirk, and sowed Free Kirks o'er the length and breadth o' Scotland."

"He'll be for putting everything right in Arran, and we will hae to thole his gushing condescensions. He'll try to make us see that every one but himself is grossly ignorant—but he'll bear wi' us—he'll bear wi' us. And you can't reason wi' young men; they move in the sublime circle o' their own parfections."

"I'll speak later, Sarah. Ruthven should have remembered that we are not babes in the Word, but men; and men who want an experienced teacher. But good-night, Sarah. His blessing be with you. I must haste me home. Annie will be wondering what keeps me. Thank you, Sarah, for your kindness."

"You are saying 'thank you' now, Robert, but I'm feared you will put my plain speaking down against me, later on."

"You know I will not."

"I am your true friend, Robert."

"You have just proved that, for any one who makes a man do what he ought to do, and can do, is the noblest of friends. I was nearly forgetting Will. I have not seen him for a few days."

"The lad has a sore heartache."

"About Annie?"

"Ay, just about Annie."

"So you told him?"

"Not I. Roy told him the morning after the words were said. Roy was that set up he could not keep quiet about his good fortune. I asked him to let the news find Will; said anybody would be better than himself, but he could not do as I counselled."

"It was like Roy. What did Will say?"

"For a few moments, not a word. He sat with his eyes dropped glowering into his coffee cup. And I could not find a word either. At last Will got to his feet and said, 'Roy, you have won the best and sweetest girl in Arran. I hope you'll be good to her. God bless you, both!' He has been a silent, lonely man even since. Last Saturday he went to

Glasgow to speak to McBrine. He thought a long voyage would be best for him. Maybe he'll get one, and Roy will be married when he comes back, and when Annie is another man's wife, Will isn't the scoundrel to give her an unlawful thought."

"And how is all going with yourself, Sarah? Are you likely to have a good season?"

"Weel, Robert, I have only three rooms rented yet—for it's not every kind o' body that wins o'er Sarah Lochrigg's doorstep—but I had news to-day of the tip-top o' the boarding gentry—no less than the famous Dr. Andrew Balmuto and his daughter. I am thinking your Annie knows the young lady—that they went to the same school in Glasgow. Well then, they are coming to-morrow."

"I wouldn't wonder if Annie knows baith father and daughter. I have heard her speak the name, and I think there was letters passing when Annie first came home, but they have stopped this while back. Girls' love isna like men's love. Of course excepts, like my wife and yoursel', Sarah."

"Women fall in love, and then there's men folk, and bairns, and this and that to do, or see about, but they are not forgetting. No, no; they are not forgetting, and if the opportunity comes, it is gey easy to kindle the old love."

“Very like it is so. Once more, good-bye, Sarah.”

She watched him outside the garden gate, but he never turned his head. “It would have been unlike him if he had,” she mused. “Robert isn’t one to look back after he has set his face the right way, but he is a grand man, and I am glad I showed him his fault. For he is sure to trample any sin under his feet, if he but get a blink o’ it.”

Brodict walked rapidly home. He had lingered long behind his usual hour, and he was sure Annie was wondering at his delay, even perhaps anxious about it. But though he was hurried, he could not be insensible to the beauty of the departing day. There was an unimaginable sunset—a soft sky in mystic waves of color, all aglow with the sun’s last beams, a twilight already settling like a grey veil over the misty hills, a twilight trinkling with dews, and a sea so calm that it looked like a sky beneath him. “The Sea is His, and He made it, and His Hands fashioned the dry land.” These words were his most frequent reflection, and as he was repeating them, he saw Annie waiting for him at the open gate. He could feel her smile before he saw it, and her words went forth pleasantly to meet him—

“O but I’m glad to see you, father! I thought long o’ your tarrying.”

"But you werena feared for me, Annie?"

"Me feared! And for you? Not likely. I knew surely, that whatever, or whoever kept you, it was all right."

"Even so, lassie. And I have some news for you. Have you had your tea?"

"I was not caring for it, till you came home."

"But now serve yourself at once. I have had a good meal. Do you want the trout?"

She laughed, and held up the four little half-pounds. "Was this the whole o' your day's work? The trout must have had a gey easy time wi' you to-day, father."

"I caught a few more than them, but I had to stop in at Sarah Lochrigg's, and she fried some, and made me a cup o' tea, and we had our talk, as we ate and drank together."

"Oh!"

"She is a noble woman, there are not many like her"—then he told her the condition of Timothy Buchan's family, and what Sarah had been doing for them, and again remarked—"She is a noble woman."

"She is—in some ways. But she has a very stirring temper, and I'm thinking she was speaking to-day of what is past and gone, and had better be

left alone. What is the good of moving about in muddy water?"

"You are meaning?"

"I am meaning the trouble between her nephews. Poor Roy! I'll warrant he got the wyte o' her sharp tongue."

"She had only good words for Roy. I was thinking she excused him over much. Excusing is accusing—mostly."

"You are right, father. When folks are innocent, they are foolish friends who go about explaining. Silence is the best answer. But whoever put out our name, it was not a crime against the Law. Spite is not a punishable offence."

"Annie, it is not crime that tempts men mostly. It is meanness, meeserable, little, dirty faults; just outside the Law's jurisdiction. I think better of a man that in a moment of temptation, or passion, commits a crime, than I do of a cowardly blackguard sneaking through the darkness to satisfy his malice and spite; not on the body—for that is punishable by the Law—but on the tenderest feelings of the Soul, which is a crime beyond the Law."

"I think such a crime ought to be punished by the Law."

"There have been hours, Annie, when I would

have liked well to have horsewhipped the dastard who blacked our name. I would have given him the Mosaic limit. Yes, it would have been an extraordinary satisfaction."

"You did not take it. I am glad o' that."

"I had not the right to take it. 'The Lord beholdeth mischief and spite to requite it.' I've had no authority given me, to do His work."

"You said you had news, father?"

"Ay, Sarah told me that Dr. Balmuto and his daughter were coming to her house for the season. They have rented her big parlor, and two of her best bedrooms. She is much set up about the circumstance."

"Dr. Balmuto. It must be the same—his daughter Marion was thick with me when we were in school together. She is a queer, wee body, but bonnie! Bonnie is no word for her beauty, she somehow bewilders a man. We wrote to each other for a year, then we had not a penful to say, for I did not know her friends, and she didn't know mine, and it was wearisome writing o'er and o'er that we loved each other, and didn't forget. But I've been waiting. I was sure I had not done with Marion Balmuto, and lo, here she comes again!"

They talked of the Balmutos and the new Minister, until Annie had finished her tea, and the Deacon

had smoked a solacing pipe; then while the dishes were carried away, and the room tidied, he went to his own room, and remained there for half-an-hour. When he returned to the house place Annie was sitting at a small round table sewing. A lamp was burning brightly before her, and its white light fell over her pretty hands, and the brown silk ruffle she was hemming. More ruffles of the same kind were lying on the table, and Brodick lifted one as he passed, and looked wistfully at it.

"This silk has a familiar look, Annie," he said.

There was a moment's pause, then she answered in a voice full of tenderness—"It was mother's. It is part of the dress she wore on the last sacramental occasion she ever kept. It was a new dress that day, and she never wore it again."

"What are you making with it?"

"I am making it over for a kirking dress."

"You mean—you mean——"

"I mean to wear it to Kirk the Sunday after Roy and I are married. It is beautiful silk, and all the lovelier and dearer for mother handseling it at her last Sacrament. Everything from my mother is a lucky handsel."

"I have seen you at your needle constant lately. Are you making your wedding clothes?"

"You have guessed right, father. I like to do it.

I sew many a loving, happy thought into them; stranger folk would, maybe, wet the thread with their tears, and stitch their ain misfortunate thoughts into seam and hem."

"You should have said a word to me. You be to have new goods for a new life," and he rose and laid a fifty-pound note before her. "Take it, my dear, and when the wedding dress is to buy, go your ways to Glasgo', and get the best o' its kind. Your father will pay the price o' it."

CHAPTER FIVE

LOVERS ALL

THE next morning Annie awoke with a song in her heart, and she was singing softly—singing and stopping—and singing again—all the time she dressed herself. The world was so beautiful; and life so full of happy expectations. She had fifty pounds for her bride clothes. Marion Balmuto was coming, and might be a sweet companion for these last weeks of her girlhood's life. True, she was not very sure of Marion. Marion was not of her kind; she was eminently of gentle birth. She was not of her disposition. Annie was religious—according to the highest conception of virtue, morality and creed. Marion was religious after that spiritual order, which is perfect freedom. Annie knew that the hearts of all men and women were desperately wicked, and that her spiritual life must be one long struggle for victory. Marion thought no evil of any of her fellow creatures; she loved all of them, and she loved God, and had no consciousness of original sin. Indeed, she was astonished, almost indignant, when told she was "naturally at enmity with God." She was sure

she was not; she knew that she adored Him in the smallest flower that grew.

Of these divergencies Annie was partly aware, but not wholly so. During the three years which had intervened since their parting Marion had grown in many directions. Annie had not strayed one footstep from the narrow road her church counselled. But though a *douce* girl living by rule, and apparently tideless blooded, she was disposed to look on the bright side of events; so that the thought of Marion's coming was, after all, a rather pleasant expectation.

It was Thursday morning, and it would likely be late before the Balmutos reached Mistress Lochrigg's house, and further, she considered, Marion would have her clothing to unpack and put into drawers and awmries; and also her grandfather was certain to bring with him many books and papers, which would also be to arrange.

"I will not call too soon," she reflected. "They will be putting by, and laying out, for at least two days; and then comes the Sabbath Day. I will go and see Marion on Monday; that will be early enough, for I do not want the little woman to think I am running after her. Often she told me of her money, and family, and extreme gentility. Well, 'Annie Brodick can afford to pass by such things, with

a whiff of her hand, and a slant out of her eyes. She can do fine, without gentility of all kinds.—She has Roy!”

The thought set her singing again, and yet for all that, she listened continually for strange footsteps. In the afternoon the Deacon went to meet the new Minister, and when he came back Annie tried to read his face. It was inscrutable, for he wished her to ask him for his opinions; but Annie had some little wilful traits, and one of them was to restrain her curiosity, and thus force her father's news. So when she sat down to tea with him, she talked of the boat, and the number of passengers, and made queer remarks about this, and that, but she never asked one question about the new Minister. But after his second cup had been served, the man gave in, as he is always sure to do, if the woman holds to her repressive tactics.

“Annie,” he said, “the new Minister came.”

“Did he?”

“Ay, Elder Ruthven went with me to meet him. I never saw Ruthven look so thin and so religious. I'm thinking he wanted the young man to understand at first sight that there would be no deviations, and no new-fangled ideas permitted in our Kirk.”

“Then he is a young man?”

“Ay, and a rather handsome young man to look at.”

“‘Handsome is that handsome does,’” quoted Annie, “but he is having a good record—is he not?”

“Good? Yes, as to talking. Most young men like to talk. I can mind well, when I thought I would rather be a preacher than a King. It is a very satisfactory thing to hear yoursel’ speaking with power and freedom.”

Annie wanted next to know what appearance this Apollas of the pulpit had, and she fixed upon his name as the best leader to her object. “What is the young man’s name, father?” she asked in a non-chalant manner.

“James Alexander Archibald Crieff.”

“Preserve us! Does he sign all them names to his letters?”

“I wouldn’t wonder. All the letters sent to our Kirk had the full name to them.”

“He must be a Highlandman.”

“He is. Ruthven told me he came from the North—Aberdeen way, I think—but Elder Bruce is sure he is a Moray or Sutherland man.”

“Why?”

“Because he has their stature—they are all sons o’ Anak.”

"He is tall then. Mr. Saunders was a wee man—he had no pulpit presence."

"Mr. Crieff is six feet, and three or four inches over it—I'll say that, and I'll not be mistaken."

"You think him handsome?"

"Well, I think he is not un-handsome. The man has red hair. I'm not liking red hair."

"If he shaves clean, you may put up with the hair on his head. And a fine skin goes with red hair."

"Freckly,—but he has a big white brow, and a pleasant mouth, and a straight nose, and two grey eyes that dirl themselves clean through you."

"I am glad I have given my heart away, else I might have fallen in love with this red-haired Highlander."

"It would be easy for any woman to do worse."

"He will have a great congregation o' the women folk, no doubt. Does he look like a gentleman, or is he like Mr. Saunders, out o' some bit shop in the Candleriggs street o' Glasgow?"

"What do you mean by a gentleman, Annie?"

"Tell me how he was dressed."

"O! it is the man's clothes, is it? Weel, he wasn't dressed like a Minister at all."

"I am glad of that. Poor Mr. Saunders was

fairly choking with his ministerial dignity. He could hardly turn his head for the stiff neckband he wore."

"There was no starch in Mr. Crieff's neckband. It was just a soft bit o' black silk."

"Black!"

"Ay, black."

"I am fairly astonished. But Mr. James A. A. Crieff is going to be interesting, if his words are as comfortable as his clothes. Did he wear a black coat?"

"Not he! The first thing I noticed was his handsome suit o' grey tweeds."

"Father, you are an extraordinary observer. Few women would not have seen as much of the man. Nothing escapes you."

The Deacon was much pleased at the compliment; it coincided with his own private opinion regarding his power of heedful, intelligent notice. "Weel, Annie," he answered, "a man who has watched the winds and the sea for thirty years, and learned every puff o' the winds, and every frill o' the sea, is bound to be an observing man. So I didn't miss much o' the personality o' Mr. Crieff. I made special notice o' his pocket handkerchief—it was that fine and white, and the big ring on his finger wasn't bought

for a few bawbees, and the shoes and stockings on his feet, and the gloves on his hands, were of the best quality; and the cut o' his soft hat was the same cut as the one I saw the Duke wearing two days ago; and much o' the same color likewise."

"Was it black?"

"It was not. It was the color o' the Tweed suit he was wearing; and his gloves were not a shade different."

"What a dandy! I never heard tell of a Minister out of his 'blacks' unless he was in his study, or digging his garden, or some other secular work."

"But he is not a dandy—don't you think it. Nothing at all like Dandy Faulds, and such men. He had an earnest face, and a purposeful way; forbye a pleasant laugh, and a trifle o' Highland accent in his speech; ay, and a trick o' drawing his white hand across his brow and eyes, as if he wanted to see clearer. I liked him—prudently, of course—to begin with."

"He will not be here long. I can prophesy that far."

"He is not intending to stop longer than the Summer lasts. He has what he calls 'his Settlement' to look after. At present his settlers are in the mountains for the hot weather, but they'll be back to the

planestones o' Edinburgh streets early in September, and then——"

"He will go back to them?"

"No doubt o' that."

"Thank you, father. I know the man now as well as if I had seen him. Will he preach next Sabbath Day?"

"As far as I know, he will."

"I am very curious, but I can wait until the Sabbath."

"Annie Brodick! You will go to Kirk to worship God, not to see the Minister; or else you'll bide at hame."

"Father, you know what I mean."

"It is a good plan to say what you mean. You haven't asked a question about the Balmutos. I saw them both—an auld man and a slender slip of a girl."

"I will go and see them on Monday."

"Why not to-morrow?"

"It is not the custom to call upon visitors at once. You must give them two or three days to settle."

"Weel, if you care so little about them as to wait upon custom, I would not go at all. Write and ask her to spend Monday with you. I am going to Glasgow as early as maybe."

"I will think about it, father. Marion used to be trying at times. She isn't a worldlike person."

"All the better for you."

"I'm doubting that. While we are in this world we must be content with it. Marion was always trying to get beyond what is revealed; yes, to get beyond even the probabilities. She is a thought too spiritual for the temporal."

"I'm not understanding."

"That is it; you can't explain her; and you can't understand her. She is whiles incomprehensible, and says things you can neither make sensible, nor foolish. But she is good and loving;" and then with a sudden flash of truth from the inward part she added, "Perhaps I am jealous of her. She is beyond me every way. I will write and ask her to spend Monday with me."

The next morning as Annie sat sewing in the sunshine, there was a soft knock upon the door. She turned quickly towards it, and saw Marion standing just outside its shadow—a small, slender figure clothed in white, cross-bar muslin frock; and on her head a Tuscan hat. There was a joyful cry of recognition, and then Annie untied the hat, and Marion's face came fully out from beneath its broad rose-

trimmed brim. Annie kissed it, and said with a rare show of affection—

“My dear Marion, you have more than your old charm. I’m feeling sure I shall be your slave again.”

“No, no, my friend Annie; though it is a kind of slavery to put up with my queer ideas and feelings; grandfather says so, and sometimes he loses his temper with me—you never did.”

“Nor am I likely to. You are very little changed, just as childlike as ever. What have you been doing these past three years?”

“I have been reading books grandfather thinks I would be wise not to read.”

“Why do you not obey him? He knows more than you do.”

“He knows nothing about that *Divine Other*, that *Thee in Me* who dwells behind the fleshly veil. And, Annie, I want to find out, I want to find out; the real woman in me cannot rest by night or day. She was born into this life with wings, I think, and they fret, fret, fret upon my soul. I want to go home.”

“You are always at home, Marion. No one has a better home than you have.”

“Oh, you don’t understand! Yes, I have a good home for this Marion”—and she stroked her bare

arms and lovely face with her small hands—"but this Marion has a guest, a soul that, wandering, lost its way; and my little body was the special home it happened on; but it is always crying for its lost heavenly home, and I am always seeking a road, Annie, always seeking—always seeking."

"My dear Marion." That was all the reply Annie could make. She was in the presence of a soul seeing by a sense of which she was ignorant. Annie's life was clearly above consciousness, her religion set firmly upon a foundation defined by creed, catechism and infallible church; but Marion's life was, in its best sense, below consciousness; along that frontier of shining table-land illumined by the *Divine Other*, the *Thee in Me*, and the tidings-bringing Angels.

Now, to oppose to Marion's spiritual cravings some strong material interest had been Annie's method with her friend in their former intercourse, and she could think of no better plan at the present hour. So she drew her chair closer, and said with sweet enthusiasm—"How pretty you are, Marion!" And Marion smiled and lifted a spray of Lemon Verbena to her friend's face—

"Has it not a heavenly perfume?" she asked. "I have heard the Angels like to rest in gardens where it grows."

"I thought you never pulled a flower."

"I never do. Every flower loves its life, and I dare not destroy what I cannot give. Mrs. Lochrigg put this spray in my hand with a good wish. So I keep the leaves for the hope they carry. Verbena is the harbinger of strange news, or the bringer of strange guests."

"Is that so?"

"Do you think flowers have no message? All of them carry a mystery. When a stranger gives you a flower, something will happen, notice what it is, and you have the message of the flower."

"I will tell you, Marion, something that is going to happen—my marriage—perhaps in August or September. Will you be my bridesmaid?"

"Oh, I should like that! Who are you going to marry? Is he good? Does he love you? What are you going to wear?"

"I want you to advise me. I know very little about fashions."

"There is only one fashion, and one color for a bride. Tell me all about it. Are you making your own clothes?"

"Yes, and with my own hands."

"I should think so; fancy making wedding clothes, on a machine—oil and dirt, and loose ends, all over

them. I do not intend to marry, but if it happened, I would sew with my own fingers every garment full of love, and dreams, and romances."

"Will you come and sew some love and dreams into my garments?"

"That would give me pleasure. I will come on Monday morning."

Then Annie showed her the garments completed, and told her about those intended, and they were soon lost in an enthusiastic discussion concerning things proper and possible, and impossible. Suddenly there was an imperative knock at the door, and Annie dropped the cloth in her hand, and went to answer it. Marion stood looking at the intruder, vaguely curious, but without interest, childlike indeed in her complete absence of shyness or self-consciousness.

Yet both girls knew instinctively that it was the new Minister; and a faint smile accompanied Annie's quick thought of his lengthy name. She might of course address him as a stranger, and so compel him to introduce himself; but this plan never entered Annie's mind. She knew who it was, why should she pretend not to know? So she said frankly—

"You are Mr. Crieff, I am thinking?"

At that moment Mr. Crieff's life was in his eyes. He was gazing at Marion, and he could not at once

command his speech. So Annie said again—"You are Mr. Crieff, I am thinking?"

Then he regarded her with an enforced smile and answered, "You are right, Miss Brodick. Miss Brodick—is it not?"

"Yes, I am Annie Brodick. Do you wish to see my father, Sir?"

"I would like to do so. Is he at home?"

"He will be in half an hour."

"Can I wait here for him?"

"Come in, Sir," and she swept from the table the obtruding garments, and led him to Marion. "My friend, Mis Balmuto," she said. Then Marion bowed, and lifted her eyes to meet Crieff's love-laden gaze. Quick as a flash of thought, she was so transfigured by a wave of rosy color, which spread over her face, and throat, and arms, and eloquent hands, that her whole body seemed to think and feel. Whatever was the cause of this emotion, it was new and charming to her; and she liked the bringer of it. As he talked with Annie, she silently watched him, sometimes lifting her eyes to his face, only to know again that strange awakening which accentuated her sense of life a thousand fold.

And Crieff in these flashing glances filled his soul with her picture. He had seen many lovely women,

and he acknowledged Annie Brodick as among them; but Marion was a being altogether apart and different—a little creature in a check-bar muslin frock, her black hair plainly banded, her large soft eyes full of a joy he did not understand, because none know it but they who seek it alone; her dreamy smile, her quiet, her neatness, and, above all, her innocent simplicity, charmed him. He had come into the room a free man, he was to leave it a bondman to emotions from which he desired no release.

Towards twelve o'clock the Deacon sent word he would not be home for dinner, and Crieff rose to depart. "I am going to Mrs. Lochrigg's," he said, "and if Miss Balmuto will accept my escort we can walk there together." Marion made neither demurs nor excuses; she lifted her hat, and Crieff stood, lost in admiration, while Annie tied the pink ribbons under her wilful little chin, and laid the rosebuds above the shadowy black hair.

"Thank you, dear Annie," she said; "I will come on Monday morning and help you to sew;" then turning to Crieff, she added, "Now I will go home with you." Annie sauntered with them through the garden, and then watched them a while down the road. Crieff had taken his place at Marion's side, and was walking there as angels may walk in Para-

dise when there is joy because of some great good that has come to the souls they love on earth.

Somehow the sight of this uncontrollable falling in love made Annie sad. What adoration, what fear, and joy, and loss of self there was in it! If this was the real manifestation of Love, what could she think of Roy? For a while she troubled herself over the difference, but her faith in her lover soon suggested a reason for it:—

“No two men,” she thought, “look alike, or act alike in any capacity, and love-making is such a very personal thing, it stands to reason, that every man will make love in a different way. And,” she continued, “I am far from thinking Mr. Crieff’s way would be satisfactory to me. A man who can’t carry his love secretly is a very open creature; Roy’s way suits me perfectly.”

All the long Summer afternoon she thought and sewed, but she did not sing, and when the Deacon came home, she did not open her heart to him. She had told herself that the events surrounding her were now laid ready for happenings of all kinds, and that it would be the part of wisdom to mind her own affairs, and let others make any move that was either foredoomed or yet to be bespoken.

She was expecting Roy and anxious for the com-

fort of his presence, for a vague feeling of something not right floated on the horizon of her soul. It was but a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, but she wished it dispersed; and felt as if Roy's beaming smile and generally light-hearted temper would put all right. So she was glad when she heard his footsteps, and she went into the garden to meet him.

"Father is in his room, Roy, making his heart quiet for the Sabbath. He always has a still hour or two after Saturday's sunset—the preparation, you know—so we will stay here, and talk a little. I am very glad to see you."

Roy looked at her gloomily. His manner was unresponsive, he was evidently in a bad temper, and he soon began to give his reasons for it—

"I'm worried out o' myself, Annie," he said.

"I am sorry, Roy. What is wrong now?"

"Will Morrison, of course."

"Your brother Will? I cannot think it."

"To be sure. I expected you to say that, or the like o' that. Nobody thinks Will can possibly do wrong, but he can raise Cain in my breast."

"Hush! I will not hear you make a comparison like that. What has Will done to make you think of Cain?"

"He's got all the Morrison luck—mine as well as his own—and he hasn't a thought o' sharing it—not he, indeed!"

"What luck in particular has come to Will?"

"Would you believe that he sails on Tuesday for New York?—on one o' the big liners too."

"How is that?"

"He just daundered into McBrine's, and said he wanted to engage for a long voyage, and they told him one o' their third officers had the diphtheria, and they would be obliged to him if he would take the sick man's place until he was better—obliged to him—that, and no less, and of course Will snapped at the offer, and so he is off to New York on Tuesday next. And here am I! I have wanted to go to New York for many a year, but nobody ever asked me to go, paid me to go, and told me they would 'feel obligated to me if I would go.' No indeed!"

"Roy, you could not have taken Will's place. You told me you never finished your navigation studies, and that you fairly hated them. You would have been a risk and a danger, and far from a help. Will has been across the Atlantic often, and is fully to be trusted."

"And I am not to be trusted."

"In your own place you are fully trustworthy, but

an Atlantic Liner is not your place. So, be glad Will has got the pleasure of it."

"I am not glad, and I am sick o' my own place. I want bigger work—for your sake."

"We will talk of that again, Roy. I like myself to have a peaceful hour on Saturday night. Have you seen the Balmutos? Marion was here this morning. She is a pretty little woman."

"And proud, and stuck-up as a peacock in full feather. I watched her on the boat. She kept close to the auld man with her—though there was two or three young fellows doing their best to please her, or get her anything she wanted. She was like a lump of ice to every word they said, and I saw a grin on the auld man's face, that was just the essence of a' things provoking. I had thought of presenting myself to her, and making a remark or two about our situation, but when I saw the baby-like ways she put on——"

"Baby-like, Roy!"

"Yes, just that; shrinking close to the auld man's side, with a kind of feared look, as if every young man on board was some sort of a roaring lion."

Annie laughed at the idea. "She would have to fetch a thought far, to think of roaring lions and Glasgow shopmen at the same moment," she answered.

"The shopmen and trippers never looked at her. It was young Faulds, and Alec Sinclair, and that private secretary fellow from the Castle. And she treated them as if they were not there. So I kept my distance from her."

"You did right. To have spoken would have been very vulgar."

"Don't use such words to me, Annie. I am all of a quiver to-night, and I can tell you, she does not think Will vulgar. She took to him at once, and so did the auld man, and at this hour Will is in their parlor, playing draughts with the auld——"

"With the Professor."

"Well, then, Professor be it."

"But there is nothing in this to put you in a quiver of ill-temper, for that is your present condition, Roy—a fit of envy and ill-temper."

"You must not talk to me in that way, Annie. It is not your place, and it is not your duty. I came for you to comfort me."

"Comfort you! Because your brother has had some good luck and good favor. It is not a case for comfort, but for congratulation. You ought to be glad and sweet-tempered over it. If the luck had come to you, Will would have been rejoicing. When

you told him you had won my promise, he gave you good wishes and God's blessing."

"Who told you that nonsense?"

"Your aunt told my father, and my father told me."

"I fairly hate Will Morrison, lately."

"Be quiet, Roy."

"I'll say my say——"

"To yourself, then. I am not stopping here to listen to it;" and she turned from him, went to the house, and slowly shut the door. She hoped he would prevent this last proof of her displeasure, but he did not; indeed she heard the clashing of the garden gate before the house door reluctantly snapped into its place. It seemed as if she had shut herself out, and she went to her room, and wept sorrowful tears for the angry words she had said. Finally, physical weariness brought her sleep, but it was sleep passed in a weird masquerade of impossible dreams, that gave her neither enlightenment nor expansion, and from which she awakened with a blinding headache.

"You are ill, this morning, Annie," said her father, "and you had better stay at home, and keep quiet."

She was grateful for the permission, and towards evening was so much better that she went down-

stairs to make her father's tea. He was in one of his sweetest moods—gentle, affectionate, and gravely happy. "It has been a blessed day, Annie," he said; "outside, earth has been like Paradise, and inside the Kirk, everyone has been satisfied."

"Then Mr. Crieff is a good preacher?"

"A good preacher by the grace of God. His beliefs are beyond dispute, and he is confident that he understands the Almighty perfectly, and that attitude is satisfactory to a congregation who have been well grounded and trained in the system o' Christian theology. He is young yet, and so he had no doubts of any kind, but discussed men's claim to immortal life and happiness with a power and positiveness that must have made all not sure o' their election, fear and tremble."

"He fell madly in love with Marion Balmuto."

"I hope not—madly. Men need a double portion o' sense when they are in love—so do women—but falling in love isn't a subject for the Sabbath Day."

It was out of such materials that the web of life was woven for the next two months. Stitches were dropped and picked up, and warp and woof got tangled, and were straightened again, and the results may be easily indicated. Annie's affection for Roy had increased, for it had been tried in a variety of

ways. At the end of July his Captain recommended him to take a month's holiday, and a young man, whom Mr. Crieff advised, was put in his place during the interval. Roy affected both pride and pleasure in this consideration, but Annie had some private suspicions about it, and the Deacon, when informed of the circumstance, refused all comment. For he felt sure that it was a sort of dismissal, and that Roy would have to look out for some other career. And that might put off the marriage. To put it off, was all Brodick hoped for; he knew that opposition would be of no use, but time—time, he told himself, might do what nothing else could.

So during the month of August Roy was a great deal with Annie and consequently had many opportunities of meeting Marion Balmuto. No friendship grew out of these meetings; there was not only a total lack of sympathy between them, there was actual dislike; in Marion's case, arising from an instinctive knowledge of the man; and in Roy's case, from wounded self-esteem, and a hateful envy of Crieff. For he constantly told himself that but for his relations with Annie, and Marion's relations with Crieff, he might have been the favored lover of the well-born, wealthy Miss Balmuto.

"But I have had bad luck in both my business

and my love," was his usual soliloquy. "I saw my dismissal in Captain's Young's face, when he told me—'to play myself for a month'—and as ill fate ordered, I had to tie myself to Annie, just before I met Marion Balmuto. Weel, I must just make the best o' things, and surely if I do lose my place, Annie will get her father to make room for me in his shop—he ought to do so—it is nothing more than his duty—forbye, he might well be glad to have a bright, handsome young man behind his old-fashioned counter. I would doubtless bring him lots o' business."

Such, and such-like, were the thoughts and hopes in Roy's heart, as he sat with Annie in the bright, hot August sunshine. Generally he was gay and entertaining, yet often cross and contradictory enough, to try even Annie's patience beyond endurance; for she could not help noticing that he was his best self when Marion was present. In his heart he disliked Marion, but he wished to make her unhappy; he believed she was really in love with him, and only accepted Crieff's company to hide her disappointment and chagrin. This attitude is a common one among young men enamoured of their own appearance, and as a general thing it is as false and unreasonable as in the present case.

Annie knew there was not an atom of truth in Roy's hints and insinuations, but she was troubled at this

temptation being in his way. She wished Marion had not come back into her life. She said to herself—"Marion is a good girl, whiles she is too good for anything, and only God knows how aggravating very good people can be." It grew constantly harder for her to fight down an unreasonable dislike, for she felt that everything in her life had suffered a slight change since Marion came to her home that day in June, and met Crieff there. Her long, quiet mornings were broken up by Marion's pretence at sewing, and the certain sequence of Crieff's call to convoy her home.

And very often during these broken mornings, some trifling look, or word, or act, occurred capable of infusing the long, hot afternoons with anxiety or chagrin.

For if Roy and Crieff met in Annie's home, Roy was boastful and irritating; Crieff calm and silent; and Marion exasperatingly indifferent to words and looks edged with wrath and disdain. Her prattle of heather and blue bells, her holy eyes, her innocent face, her unconscious air of being in some happy atmosphere beyond the stir of human passions, provoked Annie, and made Roy put his hands in his pockets to clinch them. Indeed it was only Crieff's masterful control of himself—and incidentally of others—that prevented the strong, regular order of

Brodict's domestic life being broken by some calamity, that no innocence could delay, nor self-sacrifice avert.

In this situation it was Crieff's pleasure to pass by offences, to show himself beyond grieving in Love's presence, and to carry his Marion from the unhappy unrest up to some cool covert in the hills, and sit there with her, blissfully silent, amid the whispering of pines, and the music of running waters. Such hours had a sacramental efficacy, and in them he divined something of that sixth sense by which the innocent girl at his side heard inward voices from the reality of unseen things, and saw the world as the old prophets saw it.

Another change that seemed of little importance, but eventually proved of great importance, was the rapid growth of a strong friendship between Brodict and Professor Balmuto, and as Roy was generally with Annie in the evenings, the Deacon went more and more frequently to Mistress Lochrigg's house to spend two or three hours with his friend. In old age men do not frequently make new friendships, but this was an exception. Brodict's intelligence, reasonableness, and love for religious discussion, stimulated the Professor's wide knowledge and advanced modern thought. He delighted in dropping seed into such

good ground, and the month of August saw the two old men nearly always together.

Their companionship gave Annie little concern. Her father's absence made room for Roy, and relieved her from that tension and constant fear of disagreement, almost unavoidable when the old man and the young man were together. Love is selfish, and Annie regarded any event as fortunate if it was favorable to Roy's happiness, or Roy's future. So Brodick soon felt that if he was not wanted in his own house, he was very welcome in the house of Mistress Lochrigg, and her cheery "good-evening, Robert," and the Professor's beaming smile, were balm and honey to his wounded heart. Then it was draughts, or chess, and the long pipe, and wonderful talk anent things celestial, or things ecclesiastical, and especially of this daily life with its bewildering mysteries, its griefs so certain, its needs so urgent and near, and its help and God so vague and far off.

One evening the Professor ended his remarks in these hopeless words, and Marion most unexpectedly answered them. She was in an ecstasy of love and joy, and her voice thrilled the inmost being of her listeners. "God is not far off," she said. "We are in God. His ear is close to our lips. It is never taken away. Even when we sleep and dream we

sigh into it." Her face was shining and lifted up, her hands clasped, she filled the room with a Presence

"that disturbed them with the Joy
Of elevated thought, and sense of Something
Still more deeply interfused."

Brodick bowed his head and was profoundly moved; the Professor more actively so, for after a few moments' silence he said in a voice full of that Belief which prays passionately against Unbelief—I trust it so,

"For if this pure solace should desert my mind,
What were all else! I dare not risk the loss,
To the old paths my Soul!"

The last few words were given in the ringing voice of a spiritual soldier, fighting for that inconceivable treasure—the immortal Soul—and after them all ordinary speech was discord. Brodick rose, put his hand on his friend's shoulder and went away without a word; and it was only characteristic of Scotchmen that they never spoke of the circumstance again. These interruptions were not frequent, but yet they occurred sufficiently often to be a distinct element in the intercourse between Balmuto and Brodick.

Swiftly the Summer days went past, and early in September the city visitors began to return to Glas-

gow. The Balmutos were among the first to leave, for the Professor had duties he was eager to meet. "I have had a good rest, Brodick," he said, "and I have found you. Our opinions differ, and our ways are apart, but we can each say as we go:—

"‘Whatever there is to know,
That we shall know,
Some day.’"

Neither Marion nor Annie was sorry the season was over. Marion had not been attracted by Annie's friends and surroundings, and she had been compelled to share Crieff's time with people not congenial to either of them. She had been out of sympathy with her life, restless and uncertain, but to have Crieff and his hopes and plans all to herself, had harmony in its very thought.

More than any one, Annie had been dissatisfied. In many ways she judged Marion and Crieff unfortunate to her happiness. The peaceful, regular routine of her life had been constantly invaded; and Crieff's frequent presence had kept Roy many times away from her. Oh, she had so many little grievances that she felt, but did not like to name, even to her own heart. She only knew that the Summer had been a failure. At its beginning her marriage had been prob-

able, it was now uncertain, for Roy had lost his position on *The Lady Mary*, and had not been successful in finding anything he wished to take.

In fact, Roy had set his heart on going into the Deacon's business. From long, selfish musings on the subject, he had come to the conclusion that it was his proper place. "People will wonder if your father does not take me in," he said to Annie. "If I am to be his son-in-law, it stands to reason, he ought to treat me like one of the family. And it is a sort o' reflection on my good name to be put outside, and forced to seek my bread from strange folk."

"You are going too fast, Roy," Annie replied. "If you speak to father just yet, you will get the back o' the hand. I am sure o' that."

"Then speak for me, Annie. You might do that much. It is easy for you to ask a kindness from your father, but it is gey hard for me to seek favor from folk that know nothing about me, and so, don't even treat me with becoming respect."

At length after repeated urgings Annie found a favorable moment to say—"Father, Roy has failed again in getting the place he wrote for."

"He should have gone about it. Letters! Perfect nonsense! A man ought to speak for himself."

"Is there anything you can do for him?"

"He has never asked me to do anything for him."

"He is afraid you would refuse him."

"I should."

"Then why do you wish him to ask you? That is more unkind than you ought to be."

"If he had had the gumption to say his own words, I would have thought it more manful than sending them by you—that is all."

"And you would have refused his request?"

"I would."

"Why?"

"Because I could not trust him."

"Oh, father! Yet you will trust him with your daughter."

"I do not. My daughter trusts herself with him. I take no blame as to what comes of that trust. You know well what I think of your marriage with Roy Morrison—but there is no use trying to reason with a girl in love. You could as easy beat a cloud with a walking stick."

"Poor Roy! Everybody throws a bad word at him. They might as well throw stones."

"His enemies are a troop of his own calling. I wish he was a better lad, then he would have friends in plenty. 'Arran men stand together—when they can."

“Perhaps you are right, father, but there is set before me a different measure. I can keep Roy in the right way. I can help him to conquer what is false and foolish in his nature. Even if I loved him less dearly, I would feel Roy to be my task and my duty.”

“If you talk of duty, I dare not come between you and your duty. I have nothing to say. For, my dear lass, a visible duty is a direct order from God. To obey, or to disobey its call, is, in an overwhelming sense, to say *yes*, or *no*, to God.”

Then he went away, and left Annie standing by his chair. It made his heart ache to do so, but after her claim he could not interfere. There Annie stood for a few minutes, still as a stone, gathering her soul's forces together. Her serene brow and unalterable calm came not from doubt or indifference; she knew what she had to defend, and, alas, she knew also what she might be called upon to abandon! But her father's words had thrilled and uplifted her; obediently she inclined her head, as she inclined her heart, and in low audible tones answered:—

“I ask that Duty always speak to me; through flood and fire I will obey.”

CHAPTER SIX

THE GATE OF SORROW.

DURING the next two months Roy was seeking employment in a fitful kind of way, keeping always at the bottom of his expectations the belief that Brodick would finally give him a trial; and if so, he told himself, it would not be long "ere he had firm grip of the whole business." He was a great deal in Annie's company during this time, he confided to her all his hopes and disappointments, all his likes and dislikes; he expected her to be enthusiastic over plans whose futility she could see at a glance, and he came to her with angry complaints when his unreasonable attempts ended in immense disillusion. And surely a girl so wise and affectionate must during those two months have been thoroughly enlightened as to the magnitude of the duty she had undertaken.

So occupied was she with this service of love that her father's nearly constant absence in the evenings was hardly noticed, and when Roy's remarks forced it upon her consideration, she instantly read its meaning in the light of her own wishes and pre-occupation.

"He is staying away to let Roy have his chance," she thought, "and it is kind and fatherly of him. I'll tell him so, when I can get him to talk of Roy again."

That the Deacon should leave the comforts of his own fireside and go to every Kirk meeting, or spend the hours with Elder Ruthven, or go to his shop and take stock, or look over his ledger, seemed to the selfishness of lovers quite the natural thing for him to do. Sometimes he returned home dull and thoughtful, and ate his oat cake and cheese without unnecessary speech; but generally he was cheerful and disposed to share with Annie any news he had. She was not much interested if he talked, and quite satisfied if he kept silence. It was as if in the stress of her watch over Roy, she had forgotten all the sweet confidences of their past life together.

Brodict neither questioned nor complained. He saw that she was going through a conflict, and was trying to conquer by faith and love as soldiers conquer by courage. There was a kind of sacredness in this hope that denied her own senses, a sad fatality, for he could not help believing she would eventually be beaten by some unforeseen stress of circumstance, or some terrible knowledge of things as they were.

This friction of wills and interests evoked condi-

tions influencing all, far beyond their knowledge. Sarah Lochrigg was the first to speak of it. "Robert," she said one afternoon when she was in his shop making purchases, "Robert, you be to consider Annie a little. She looks like a haunted woman, and her eyes are wells o' anxiety and fear. Roy is o'er much for her—take my word for it."

"She will have to prove that to herself, Sarah. She will take no one's word for it."

"Will is coming home to-day. He has had a fine time on the Liner, and he is fairly out o' his senses about America. You would think the man had never seen Scotland."

"I hope you'll be able to keep the lads from quarreling. It is a shameful thing for brothers to do."

"Weel, Robert, in time we forgive even the people whom we have injured. If Roy will forget, Will is not likely to call up what is past and gone. It is a pity you don't like Roy. You might influence him a deal, Robert."

"Sarah, no one can force love. It is there, or it is not there. And no one can influence Roy against his will. He ought to go into the world and find his level. He rates himself too high. Nobody wants him."

This conversation annoyed Brodick. He had a half-realized fear about Will's return. The young men could not meet without some result; what was it to be? On his way home he happened to see the meeting of the brothers. Will—the very incarnation of health and prosperity—was walking rapidly toward Mrs. Lochrigg's, and Roy was directly in his path. Without a moment's hesitation Will hailed his brother, and as Roy came closer he stretched out both hands to greet him. Then side by side, laughing and chatting, they went on their way together.

"Annie," said the Deacon as he took his place at the tea table, "I saw a pleasant sight as I came home. I saw Will Morrison and his brother meet, and I am proud to say there was nothing but love and good-will between them."

"I expected that, for Roy is a kind, forgiving creature," she answered. "He always said Will would be sorry for blaming him about that weary boat name."

"Did Will blame him?"

"Maybe not, in so many words; but he never contradicted those who did blame Roy. Now Roy would have dared anyone to put the deed on his brother. He would have stood by Will, shoulder

to shoulder. Poor Roy is too noble and too generous for this world!"

Brodict looked at his daughter in astonishment, but he made no reply. Was there any use answering a love-sick girl, either according to her folly, or against it? No, such cases are beyond reasonable interference. But there is a guidance for each and all, and Brodict knew that by low listening he would hear the right word, at the right hour. And perhaps Annie's unreasonable love had its own message, for in spite of all our 'New Thought' and miraculous 'Progress' it takes a soul to save a soul, as it did in the days gone by.

For a few weeks Will seemed to have a good influence over his brother. Roy had become shabby and down at heels, and Will loaned him twenty pounds, and sent him to Glasgow to buy clothing suitable for the season. "You will lose both your love and your money, Will," said Mrs. Lochrigg. "Roy was learning a lesson he sorely needed, why did you hinder it? If I had thought a new suit would help the lad, you might have been sure he would have had it, but I thought different."

"Yet perhaps it will help. I have known a lot o' strength and hope come into a man's heart with a suit o' good tweed cloth. And I liked to put it on

Roy. He is my brother; what he requires and I have is, in a way, his right. I am going to take a place in Creighton's sail factory, and I am trying to get Roy to go with me; but he thinks it a downcome, and he says Annie thinks the same, and would be fairly angered at him."

"What for are you doing the like o' that yourself, Will? I am not sure you are right."

"I think I am. When I first spoke to McBrine about a long voyage, I rented my fishing boat for a year to John Ballantyne. He would willingly give me a place in her, but when I think of it, I know that would not do. There would be owner and master both on her. I would feel in a wrong position, and Ballantyne would be still further out o' the way. Yet I cannot sit idle, till McBrine has another chance for me, and Creighton has offered me two pounds a week. I shall take that, till better ways and wages turn up."

"That is good sense, and good luck follows good sense. If you could get Roy to go with you——"

"He will not. I have said all I can. And he declares Annie stands by him."

"I am doubting that. Annie Brodick isn't without sense, and she loves money. She would take up your parable, not Roy's."

"He looks very handsome in his new clothes. He is a lad to be proud of, Aunt."

"I wish he had less pride, and I think if Annie does not like him going to Creighton's she might get her father to help him some way or other."

"Roy feels that. He has another scheme in his head now, and I am feared both you and I will have to say 'No' to him. It is utterly and beyond all argument, unfeasible; a money dream, that is all."

"A dream! What is it?"

"He wants us to supply the capital for a ship-chandler's shop in Glasgow. I am to manage the business, and Roy will keep the books, and beat up customers. He knows a few captains, and so he thinks his personal influence would do a deal."

Mrs. Lochrigg laughed scornfully. "I would not trust a bawbee in such a silly scheme. That's a dream, sure enough!" she answered.

"Yet he is working like one possessed o'er the estimates, the outlay, and profits, and such like. He is calculating, as he thinks, to the last halfpenny; and you would fairly wonder to see the work he is putting on the papers—the beautiful writing, and figuring, and rulings in red ink, and every paper tied wi' pink or blue tape. He will be showing them

to you anon. Aunt, you be to speak him kindly, he is so sure you will help him."

"And you?"

"I have done all that I can to discourage him. I have counted up the price o' rents and other outlays, and his answer is always a sort o' triumphant flourish o' the papers, and an assurance that 'all the expenses are set down and accounted for; and the profits mair than able for them.' What will we do wi' the lad? My heart aches for him."

"How much money is he wanting?"

"A thousand pounds."

"A thousand pounds! What sploring nonsense! I would be mad entirely if I listened to him."

"He has the opinion that I simply picked up siller in New York; many folks have that idea of New York—and he wants me to advance three hundred pounds. He is counting on you for three hundred, and on the Deacon for four hundred."

"The born idiot! I cannot make mysel' believe in such daftness. Are you joking with me, Will?"

"It is the naked truth."

"Don't let him come to me. Tell him I'll not stand one halfpenny for such a perfectly crazy project. And I know Robert Brodick will not listen to him. He will maybe give a mouthful o' good ad-

vice, but that will be the length o' his help. What about yoursel', Will?"

"I cannot lend what I do not possess. I am not worth three hundred pounds, but even if I had the money, I would not help Roy to put himself in such a position; and I would not be a partner in it, for all the gold in Glasgow. Oh, I could not, Aunt! I could not do business on other people's money."

This conversation is sufficient to explain Roy's position after he had been heartened, and encouraged by his brother's loan, and his hopes of Will's further assistance. For some time his scheme—however absurd—made him happy. His sanguine opinions of his personal merits made success seem easy and inevitable. If Will led the way, his aunt would follow, and then Brodick couldn't, for his own sake, refuse to do his share. Why, every decent person in the Kirk, and out of it, would cry shame on his niggard temper if he did not give his own daughter's husband-to-be a helping hand. So he flattered himself, for so he believed.

In this dream he passed his days, laying the most elaborate plans for financing and managing the proposed enterprise; never once reflecting that he knew nothing practically of a ship's requirements. But Will's ready taking up the trade of sail-making,

had set his imagination to work. If Will knew about sails, he must also know about ropes, and cables, and anchors, and all other necessities. And also, there were catalogues and books without end, prepared specially for buyers by those who knew exactly what a ship-chandler's shop should contain.

It was all so plain and reasonable to Roy, so utterly foolish to every one else. And as soon as he began to put his plans to the test he had to listen to some unpleasant truths. The Deacon told him plainly "his scheme was dishonest in its fundamentals, for that he himself risked nothing." Roy reminded him that he risked his time and his labor, and after a very scornful, ill-tempered discussion, the Deacon unadvisedly called him "a fool," upon which Roy in a blaze of passion answered:—

"I have known many kinds of fools, Deacon, and there is one very silly kind up your own sleeve, in this particular case."

"Sir, I'll request you to take yoursel' and your fatuous, ridiculous, dishonorable plans out o' my decent store!" retorted the Deacon. He was white and stern with anger, to which mood Roy was so oblivious that he answered his demand with a provoking laugh, and a last advice to the Deacon to "take a big share in the ' fatuous, ridiculous, dis-

honorable plan ' lest he should live to fret himself o'er his stupidity."

He went straight from the Deacon to Mrs. Lochrigg, for he felt sure if he did not, Brodick would hasten to prejudice her against him. She had told Will that if Roy came to her with such like foolishness, she would quickly send him to the right about.

The young man compelled her to listen to him, but it was with a face full of dissent, frequent ejaculations of "*Im-phm! Im-phm!*" and a peculiar tit-titting on her brow with her finger.

"You see, Aunt," he argued, "a man can do nothing in a little place like this."

"The place is o'er big for you."

"In Glasgow he has a thousand chances."

"Glasgow is the city o' Human Power. It would crush a man without a bawbee to dust under its feet."

"Not Royden Morrison. He is not to be crushed. If he was, he wouldn't be here, after the fight he has just had wi' Deacon Brodick."

"*Im-phm!* Two hundred years ago some one thought o' harnessing a flock o' geese for a trip to the moon. They could not manage it. Your scheme is just about as sensible."

"I was saying I had had a fight wi' Deacon Brodick—the mean body that he is! I'll not forget his damned unpleasant manner, and his uncivil words."

"You will forget how to swear in my house, Roy. The Deacon is a wise man; if he gave you his advice, I counsel you to take it."

"He is a greedy man, he would not part with the smoke from his porridge if he could help it. I am thankful to say, I gave him a little o' my advice. I told him that he had a daughter, if whiles he would remember the fact, and that a man who tries to save both his siller and his soul, sets himself a job beyond his management. Oh, I gave him as good as he sent!"

"I have no doubt of it, and in so doing you proved yoursel' a fool twice over."

"If I had brought him some careless, ill-finished plan, he might have swithered, and delayed; but I defy any one in Glasgow, or out o' Glasgow, to have offered a better or more correctly prepared synopsis of income and expenditure. It was in itsel' a clear title to success."

"Roy, you are blinded by your own proud imaginations. And I notice that you always found it easy to read your title clear to everything you wanted. I

am feared your ideas would end in something not unlike thievery."

"Thievery! I scorn the word! It is a matter of business. Thievery indeed! Aunt, what do you mean by such a word?"

"God's sake, lad, you are surely demented!" and she looked straight at him with the wonderful, character-reading eyes of the Scotch peasant. "It is a sickening bit o' business. Go away, Roy, and get a cast of the world, and you'll find out then what miracles o' folly you were expecting from all who cared for you."

"Go away? Well, what if I do?"

"Yes, as you say—what if you do?"

"There is Annie."

"As you say—there is Annie."

"Well?"

"You and her for it. Settle the matter between you."

"I see. At the last, and the long, you refuse to help me."

"Exactly. Anybody that cared a bodle for you, would refuse. Before you knew how, or wherefore, you would be neck deep in debt, maybe debt you couldn't explain to suit the comprehension o' creditors; and then it would be the bottomless pit of some

lawyer's consulting room, and perhaps worse places—for your friends."

"*Dagon* you and your money! I'm glad to know, 'Aunt, how much of your love I have."

"Keep a civil tongue in your mouth."

"Selfish folk ought to live by themselves."

"I think so too. There is going to be an alteration in my house, and that you'll see, and find out. I trow, you are an ungrateful cad! I have been a mother to you for twenty-five years, but remember! you can go too far! yes, you can go too far!"

"*Take care! Take care!*" said Roy's soul within him, and Roy knew that he was on the verge of "too far."

"The parish has been sizing you up lately, my lad," Mrs. Lochrigg continued, "and I heard one woman say the other day, as you passed her, 'Poor beggar! everything goes wrong with him!' Is that the kind o' reputation you want?"

"It's a shame, Aunt! It isn't my fault. I have done all I could. My luck is against me, and you, that have always stood by me like a mother, are now ready to turn me out o' house and home—though you know well I have not a place, forbye your house, in which to lay my head."

The woman's heart was aching with sorrowful

love, as he spoke. She longed to take him in her arms, and comfort him, as she had done all his life. She was making excuse upon excuse, even as she sat speechless. And when Roy came close to her, and took her hands, and laid his face against hers, and said "Kiss me, Aunt, kiss me, *Mammy!*" she burst into passionate weeping, and let him make all the excuses he wanted.

Yes, she finally began to blame others. She "wondered at Deacon Brodick not helping an honest lad, trying to do his best—he might at least have been more considerate—and Annie was not doing what might well be expectit o' her—why did she not try, and better try, till she got round the old man? He was always said to be gey fond o' his daughter, why did he not give her a house o' her own, and the lad she loved? what was siller for, but to make happiness?" and so on.

The questions were wet with tears, but they did not comfort Roy, for instead of offering him money, she advised him to go with his brother to Creighton's for a few weeks. "Do that," she said, "and I will write to my Uncle David Home, and ask him to find some suitable outgait for you, Roy. David is a man of some consideration in Edinburgh, and though we have not been very good friends for a

few years, he loves me, and he'll do what I ask him to do."

"I would like to go to Edinburgh, Aunt. I would marry Annie, and carry her away wi' me to Edinburgh, and the Deacon should never get sight nor sound o' her again, if I could help it. Oh, Aunt, there is none like you! I love you best of all!" Then he complained that he was worn out, and felt like to faint with trouble and disappointment, and she rose in a hurry and fried him a rasher and a couple of eggs, and made him a cup of refreshment out of the black tea pot, which Roy, at this hour, thankfully accepted. And they were closer and dearer than they had been for months—

"So blessings on the falling out
That all the more endears
When we fall out with those we love
And kiss again with tears."

After this reconciliation Mrs. Lochrigg would listen to nothing against Royden Morrison. The Deacon called that evening to talk the matter over with her, and she treated the subject with a sorrowful sympathy beyond his understanding. "Yes," she said, "the poor lad showed me his papers, and told me his plans. I think all they wanted was the money to carry them out. It makes me down-

hearted to see so much good work flung to the Back o' Beyond. I've no doubt," she continued, "that there are plenty o' good men in Glasgow that would snap up Roy's business ideas if they only knew o' them; for the lad has a wonderful business gift, if he wasn't so crampit for ready siller"—then seeing the question in Brodick's eyes, she forestalled it by a deep sigh, and a "thousand pities and regrets, that all her property was tied fast by the late Captain Lochrigg's o'er careful thought o' her welfare; and goodness knows," she added, "all my own siller—to the last sixpence—is needful in this house, to make buckle and belt meet. But oh I'm sorry for the poor lad! He is a good lad going to the mischief for the want o' a friend, who could give him steady work and wage."

The Deacon was powerless and speechless against such an attitude, and he went home much earlier than he intended; and she sent the servant lass to the door with him, instead of seeing him o'er the steps herself, her usual custom. It was a bitter experience to Brodick, and his anger was not to look for. It spoke in the passionate flings of his stick, and in every stamp of his broad feet. He felt that he had been unjustly treated, and for a young man undeserving of his favor, and who had, in a manner,

forced himself into his life. And when he reached home, Annie, with an ostentatious air of injury, told Roy he must go away, and then lingered with him at the door, until her father angrily bade her "Come out o' the cold sea wind, unless she wanted to get the pneumonia and go to her grave," which alternative she hopelessly accepted, as "better than the weary life she had to dree."

It was an altogether miserable situation, and no one appeared to have the will or the courage to bring to frank explanation its worst elements, and so conquer, or at least control them. So the trouble grew, and grew, and at length in one fateful hour passed with Roy through the Brodicks' open door, and sat down upon their hearthstone. It was a stormy night nearing the New Year. The Deacon had gone to the Kirk, and Annie had given to the ancient house-place a cheerful air of cozy beauty. The fire danced and blazed on the white hearth, on the ivory-like deal furniture, on the gayly patched cushions, and pretty crockery, on the flowering plants in the window, and the colored pictures on the white walls.

And there was no picture in the room fair as herself, as she stood listening to catch the sound of her lover's coming. She had dressed with care and taste,

and seemed to be in some enchanting haze of white and color of bluebells. It was only pretty ribbons and some woven lace, but it had *the touch* and the effect of genius in its arrangement. Outside, it was snowing and blowing, but she knew Roy would not fail her, and she resolved that on this evening no disagreeable subject should be named. They would be lovers only, and the world and the care o' it, should not come into their thoughts at all.

As the clock struck seven Roy came in, out of the storm, laughing and shaking the frozen snow out of his black curls. He threw off his plaid, took Annie in a loving embrace, and then snuggled comfortably down among the cushions of the big chair she had placed on the hearth for him. A little table was spread with some dainties of Annie's own preparing, and he ate heartily, and as he did so told Annie the particulars of a trip to Glasgow from which he had just returned. For nearly three hours the evening was all that Annie had hoped and expected it to be. Then something happened. That inner self, which is so often foolish, and really inimical to us, put a thought too strong for Roy's resistance into his mind, and with the thought there came an almost overpowering impulse to carry it out.

Now this particular thought Ray had distinctly

resolved should be shared with no one—not even Annie. In talking to himself—that is, to his inner self—he had advanced sufficient reasons for keeping the circumstances an absolute secret. Yet all through the sweet converse of the evening, he had felt the urging of this unknown companion to tell Annie. It had whispered continually, “Tell Annie. Why not?” So at last he rose, and said:

“I must away now, Annie; it is best to go before our happy evening gets a set-back; and your father will be home at elder’s hours, and of course have something unpleasant to remark.” Then how it came about, no human reasoning may explain, but against desire, and without intention, the words he should not have uttered, were spoken:

“I must tell you a strange thing I have found out, about my brother Will.”

Annie lifted a face suddenly full of apprehension, and at the same moment both felt the chill that accompanies ill-omened words. Roy wished with all his heart he had been miles away, and Annie was aware of the oncoming of some trouble it was too late to avert. Her soul was strangely disquieted within her, and she was seized with an imperative desire to see, and to know, whatever she had to face. “What have you found out, Roy?” she asked, and

her voice was cold and constrained, as she added, "Nothing wrong. I am sure of that."

"That is, as you take it, Annie. I think it is wrong for a man to be scheming and making plans for his own particular selfish interest, by the side of his kinfolk, and as it were at his own fireside."

"Speak plainly. I am not understanding."

"Whatever is the matter with you, Annie?"

"Tell me what there is to tell, Roy. I am not believing there can be much out of the way."

"It is just this. Will has been seeking a position on one, or any, of McBrine's ships."

"That is well known."

"It was talked of when Will first came home, but I have been made to understand lately that he would stay at Creighton's until something was arranged that would suit me, as well as himself."

"Did Will promise you that? You never told me so."

"Not in so many set words, but I understood, plain as daylight, that that was how affairs were to be arranged. No doubt, because of this understanding, he was trying to keep all his movements secret, then when all was ready, he would have slipped away some night, without a thought o' me. However, I found out what he was after, and that in a rather

unusual way—indeed it fairly looked like a Providence.”

“What are you beating around the bush for? Speak plainly, Roy.”

“Well then, I went into Lucky Hislop’s and she gave me a letter that had come by the morning’s mail. She thought it was mine, but it was not mine, it was for Will. The doited auld wife is losing her sight. She isn’t fit to handle folk’s letters, I’m sure of that.”

“But surely, surely, you did not open Will’s letter! You would never do a thing like that! It is not to be believed.”

“I was not noticing the direction very clearly.”

“When did you get this letter, Roy?”

“Oh, it is a week or more, since!”

“My God!”

“Well then, what’s the matter wi’ you?”

“You never said a word about it, before.”

“And I am sorry I said a word the now. What for are you looking at me in that way? Your eyes are like two pistols.”

“I was wondering—I was wondering”—she ceased speaking, for Roy had taken a letter from his pocket, and was offering it to her.

“Read that,” he said.

“Is it Will’s letter?”

“Yes, it is Will’s letter. Read it, then you will see what the sneak has been planning, never saying a word to me, or to kin or friend either.”

She drew back in disdain and anger. “I would not touch it,” she said, “for all the gold in Arran. Roy, Roy, you have no right, not the shadow of right, with that letter. It is downright theft to have it in your pocket. You are wronging your brother shamefully, every moment you keep it from him. Go to him at once. Make what plea you can for the wicked deed you have done. Oh, Roy! Oh, Roy! I cannot believe it! I cannot bear it!”

“Parfect nonsense! What are you crying about? A poor wife you would make for any man, if he could tell you nothing but what everybody might know! The letter came to me in the regular way. It was, as I said before, a kind o’ Providence, for it has let me into Will Morrison’s secrets.”

“You are a bold sinner to dare to lay such a mean, contemptible act on Providence. More likely it was some devil’s work. Anyhow, I will not listen to your charging Providence with your own low, slinking sin. I will not.”

“‘Will’ and ‘will not’ are for men to say, such words are not for women folk. Keep that in your

mind, if you can. I tell you, I will read any letter I like to read. How was I to know, when Lucky Hislop put the paper in my hand, that it was not mine?"

"I suppose Will Morrison's name was on the outside of it."

"Yes, it was. 'Mr. William Morrison' was sprawling from one side to the other. But what of that? I wasn't taking particular notice of the outside o' the letter. I saw 'Morrison' plain enough outside, but it was the inside I was interested in. Anybody might have done the very same thing."

"Say that much. Yet after you had read a line or two, you must have known that it was not your letter. Then, no doubt, you looked well at the outside of it."

"Say that much, and what do you make o' that?"

"I make this—that you knew, mostly at once, that you held in your hand what was not yours, in any sense. Then you ought to have gone straight-way to your brother and said, 'Will, I opened this letter by mistake, but I have read no more of it than let me know it did not belong to me. I hope you will excuse me, and poor Lucky Hislop as well.'"

"Such stupendous folly! I would just like to see

Royden Morrison making a talk, and a wonderment o' himself, for a screed o' paper."

"It comes to this—you can give up the letter or you can give up Annie Brodick. I will not put my hand in your hand again until you have made it clean to your brother Will."

"You are caring a deal for my brother Will. I am thinking he ought to be in my place. Give him the letter yourself. There it is!" and he flung it on the table with great passion.

"I will not black my hand with it—and you will make your own excuses, and seek your own discharge from the shame and the blame of such a dirty bit of business. I am not sure but what keeping a letter, not your own, is an actionable offence; it ought to be, I know that."

"And so you are going to fling me over for Will's letter! I have been long thinking you were not caring for me."

"You know you are lying now. I have told you this night that I love you better than all the world, and you know well that I would not say them words unless they came warm from my heart. But it is the man I thought you, that I love. I could not love—I would not dare to love, a lad that would open and read a letter that was not his—ay, and then keep

it for a whole seven days afterwards. So, Roy, listen to me. You must go straight to your brother, this very minute, late as it is, and give him what belongs to him, with all proper regret for your unworthy conduct. If you don't do this, and all of it, you may count every word between you and me, unsaid, and unredeemable."

"You are not in earnest, surely, Annie?"

"As sure as death, I am in earnest."

"Well, I cannot give you up. I would far rather make a born idiot o' myself. So, I will go to Will, and do what you bid me. You are an unfeeling lass to put the lad who loves you through such a humiliation. But I'll go to Will. I know he will just laugh at the whole circumstance. He'll laugh at me too, but it is little you care for that."

"Oh, Roy! I want you to do right. I want you to do right."

"I have said I would do what you told me to do." Then he passionately kicked a chair out of his way, and lifting his cap and plaid, left the house without a word to the woman who stood so white and sorrowful, watching his furious departure.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ROY ACCUSES HIMSELF

As a bird flies to its nest at the sudden breaking of the storm, so Annie flew to her room, when she heard the clash of the garden gate. She forgot the unlocked door, the blazing fire, the burning candle, and when the Deacon returned ten minutes later, he was momentarily shocked by such extravagant carelessness. With some temper he covered the fire, and locked the door, then lifting the swaling, fluttering candle, he went to the foot of the stairs and called "*Annie!*" in no undecided tones. She did not answer instantly, for her mind was so overwhelmed in its own grief that her father's voice seemed far off and irrelative. He called again, and still she could not quite compel the necessary attention. Then she heard his step upon the stair, and she went to the door and turned the key.

"Are you within, Annie?"

"Yes, father."

"What for did you go to bed and leave the door undone, and fire and candle wasting? I am fairly astonished at your carelessness."

"I was suffering very much, father."

"But you might have called up the lass if you were not able to put things as they ought to be."

"Father, I had all I could do to reach my room."

"Can I get you anything?"

"I have all I want, father. I know well what to do when I am in trouble of any kind."

"Weel, if you get no better, call me, and I'll go for the medical man; though Doctor McFarlane is fearsome angry if he is called at night—and charging for it, too."

"I'm not requiring McFarlane. I'll do better wanting him. Just leave me to myself, father. I'll be fit enough by morning."

"God help and bless you, Annie!"

He went away with the blessing on his lips, and then returned to the house-place, and began to look around for his usual bread and cheese and glass of milk. Annie had forgotten them. "It is easy to say who has been here," he muttered. "Only Roy Morrison could make her forget me, and it is most humiliating to be put o' mind for the like o' that ne'er-do-well. And if I am any judge o' women-folk, there has been a quarrel between him and Annie—and the poor lass is heart and soul sick. That is the way o' this business. I am seeing it

all clearly, ay, and feeling it likewise—a month or two on the treadmill would be a good thing for the lazy, lying scoundrel. God forgive me! I'm making myself jury and judge baith. Keep your castle, Robert Brodick! There's an enemy at your gates."

These sentiments, mingled with verses of warning and encouragement, disciplined the angry father until he fell asleep under their influence, and his soul went to that lowest chamber of being in which there is always a romance and a mystery—the wonderful mystery of dreams—the unfolding and the enlightenment of which cannot come in any other way, because for it, words—however wise—would be impotent things.

So the man slept, while his nobler part was in the School of Dreams, and the woman sat tearless and dumb with hands clasped upon her knees. There was no thought of sleep in Annie's eyes, they were fixed and wide open, and without the shadow of tears. She was not a girl ready to weep. She hardly remembered any occasion when she had done so. A kind of Spartan self-control had been the law of her childhood, and even at this bitter hour she sought not the relief of tears. Neither did the oppression on her heart drive her into restlessness and movement; she could not, as many do, walk with sorrow

until the weary body compelled surcease in sleep. On the contrary, she sat motionless in the light of the waning moon, while all the waves and the billows of Grief's illimitable sea went over her. She was dumb, and made neither prayer nor complaint, for she was stupefied by the sudden, unequivocal revelation of her lover's utter lack of moral sensibility. Roy had committed a crime, and was indifferent to the turpitude of the act; and to Annie, this spiritual apathy was an abdication of his spiritual inheritance.

If he had expressed any regret, however feeble, she could have hoped and endeavored, but at this hour there was no hope, no endeavor, no extenuation possible. Therefore, her distress was stifled, dark, void, and unimpassioned, and found no natural outlet in prayers, or tears, or in future probabilities. All earth was black, and all heaven blind; she had wilfully chosen a lover without virtue, honor, or rectitude, and so, she feared, forfeited all claim upon spiritual help or interference. For as yet she had not found out *that God is the only refuge for women who have loved unworthily, and that He waits in eternal patience their hour of need.*

So she was desperately miserable. She could only suffer. She had indeed satisfied her conscience, but her heart was cold and comfortless. She had done

her duty, but love was sorely wounded, even unto death. Nature, too, seemed hostile; the snow had ceased, but the night was bitterly cold, and agitated by a ghostly wind. Nevertheless, joyful or sorrowful, the hours go by, and at last the dawning made its noiseless entrance. Then, the cold grey light, the angry clouds covering the sky, and leaving no door open into heaven; the weight of the slow, steady, monotonous rain was the very atmosphere of her silent, hopeless sorrow. For she had resolved to say nothing to her father until she knew whether or not Roy had made his confession, and Will accepted it.

The Deacon was equally reticent. He felt quite sure that Roy Morrison was the "because" of his daughter's miserable appearance, but when Annie said "she had the worst headache she ever had in her life," he accepted her reason without question. Indeed the girl's physical anguish was so apparent, it called for the most loving sympathy, without any "why" or "wherefore," and Brodick's heart was as tender as it was strong. Annie knew this, and when he drew her aching head against his breast with loving offers of help, his unmistakable affection almost opened the Gate of Tears for her. One moment's abandonment, and she would have confessed to the

fatherly heart on which she leaned, the uttermost of her sorrow.

But this confidence was what she feared to make just yet. She must know the best, and the worst of the affair first. She must, if it was possible, seek out some way of forgiveness which would satisfy her conscience. But if her father knew the facts, as they were at present, he would listen to no excuse; he would say, "The man has confessed his guilt, he has even gloried in it, what more is necessary?" And disliking Roy, as he did, he would be a hard judge, yes, a very hard judge. So she resolved for the next three days to conceal her anxiety, to assume her usual interest in daily life, and even pay extra attention to her father's comfort and conversation. For she told herself, she must give Roy three days, since Will might not be at home, or if so, not be able at once to look over the injury done him.

But this was only respite of grief, its cure could not grow in such a bounded field; and in the intervals of her father's absence, and in the long, woe-some hours of the nights, the restrained suffering flowed back upon her heart with overwhelming power, and presentiment of evil. Two alternate fears tormented her; first, that Roy had not kept his promise to give Will the letter which belonged

to him. She had told him to go that very hour to his brother and ask his forgiveness, and she believed if Roy had done this, he would have come to her the next evening to receive the praise he would consider due him for his self-denying humiliation. But three days passed, and Roy made no sign. Then she had to face a certain necessity. She must either send for Will Morrison, and herself tell him of the wrong done, or she must trust her father with the message. For by the end of the second day it had become a crying urgency to reveal the matter—her conscience already accused her of a delay she would not have granted to any other person, with the same stress of restitution urging confession.

On the second day, the second doubt intruded on the first. This was a fear that Roy, having given his brother the letter belonging to him, had met with something less than Will's habitual generosity, and that either, because he had some dread of consequences, or was deeply mortified at the shameful acknowledgment he had been forced to make, the offended man had set down against her the disgrace of his own act. For Annie knew well that such a result would not only be possible, but actually natural to a moral intelligence as perverted and ineffectual as that of her lover.

On the third morning the Deacon had an unexpected call to Loch Ranza, and Annie seeing his hurry and preoccupation, could not wisely open a subject so important. Perhaps she was relieved by this favorable respite, for Roy would certainly hear of the Deacon's absence, and so avail himself of the opportunity—but if not, then she would give up hoping, and nothing should prevent her sending her father to Will, immediately on his return the following day. Her dying trust seized eagerly this last, frail hope, for she had suffered much from that cold temptation which comes to the noblest hearts, when virtue has failed to reward, and they are half-inclined to regret having served her—when they say with the great seer-singer, "In vain have I washed my hands in innocency."

In the afternoon she walked down to her father's shop, after assuring herself that the things she went for were really needed, and that she had not invented their requirement; yet she was consciously aware that she might meet Roy in this way of duty and requirement. She did not meet him, but she saw him with his brother Will; they were coming from Creighton's together, and they appeared to be on their usual affectionate terms. Then she returned home, and her heart was comparatively light. Roy

had confessed, and evidently been forgiven, and sooner or later he would return to her. Unconsciously, she could not, even yet, face life without him.

About seven in the evening she was sitting alone, considering what step would now be the right one to take. If Roy had told his brother, and they were friends, there did not seem to be any reason to trouble the Deacon with the matter. It would be kind and prudent to let it rest. Such silence could hurt no one, on the contrary, discussion would cause ill-temper and much evil speaking, lying and slandering. This was Annie's honest decision, and it was grateful to her. For she longed to bury the fault, to forgive and to forget it, and take back Roy to her tender mercy and her loving kindness.

Softened by such thoughts, she sat silent by the fireside. She was neither watching nor expecting, for as Roy had not come at once for her approval, she judged he would not come for at least a month, unless the holiday call should bring him to make all clear and happy for the New Year. So far she had gone in anticipation, when Roy stepped softly into the room. He saw the swift change in Annie's face, the splendid wave of color that came like sunlight over her pale cheeks, the smile that transformed

her as the sea is transformed by the dayspring, and he knew that this added splendor of beauty had been called forth by his presence.

"Weel, Annie!" he said.

"My dear Roy!"

"Will you give your dear Roy a welcome to-night? You sent him away in a fine blaze o' temper."

Her soul was instantly on guard. The beating of her heart was almost audible, but she was not to be betrayed by its entreaties. Yet Roy saw in her outstretched hands, her eager looks, her tender eyes, the great affection with which he had inspired her, as she answered:—

"You are dearly welcome, welcome as life to me, for I know you would not be here, if you had not put the wrong right. and come to tell me so."

"Of course."

"What did Will say?"

"He just made a laugh o' the whole business. I told you he would. He said I wasn't to speak o' the matter. He does not want his plans made free to all and sundry, and I told him I hadn't named the subject to a creature but you."

"Well then?"

"He said that words were as safe with you as if they were stones dropped in the deep sea."

"And, Roy, Roy, my dear lad, you are far happier for telling Will?"

"Of course I am happier, because it puts you and me right. The letter did not trouble me, but I could not thole your feeling about it."

Then she went to him, and lifted the cap from his head, and he took her in his arms, and their reconciliation was complete.

"We will never name the unlucky bit o' paper again," he said, and Annie was willing it should pass into oblivion. A sweet content followed her anxiety, and she told herself again that her influence for good on Roy's character was now proved and certain. An exceedingly happy evening followed. Never had Roy been so loving and so charming, and never had Annie been so beautiful and affectionate. For three hours they sat looking into the future together, seeing nothing there but lifelong happiness, and love everlasting.

In the midst of such happy thoughts sleep found Annie, but where sleep took her, and to what stern revealer, none may say. She opened her eyes at the dawn with a sigh, and was immediately conscious of a strange depression. "It is the bad weather," she thought as she went to her window and saw the heavens and the earth full of a brood-

ing storm. The dull sky darkened down to the edges of a black sea, and the grey-sailed ships looked in the thick mist like gigantic phantoms in winding sheets. She turned shivering from the outlook, and dressed quickly and without interest in her appearance. Bodings of evil, unsanctioned by her will, and having no root in apparent circumstances, seemed to whisper her, she knew not what, of coming evil. She was anxious without reason, restless, indifferent to her duties, actually cross to the good-natured servant girl, who tried to understand and please her.

She was quite aware of her fault, and for a time took a perverse kind of pleasure in letting temper have its way with her, whatever she was doing. But when feelings come from unsuspected causes, the defendant is at a disadvantage, and doubtless Annie's inexplicable moods were the outcome of painful, unremembered dreams, which sleep after sinking her far below its ordinary tide, had given her during the past night, since

"From the soul's subterranean depth upborne,
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs and floating echoes, and convey
A melancholy into all our day."

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

About noon she endeavored to put down the climb-

ing fears of unreasonable anxiety. "I am a selfish girl," she thought, "letting I don't know what ruin the whole day. I wish father would win home. And I pray God the storm does not catch him among the mountains."

This thought released her from personal interests, she began to think of others, and was instantly more cheerful. It was a cruelly cold afternoon; the wind cried drearily, and the black winter sea made a solemn roaring on the foggy beach. So she built up the fire, and kept the kettle boiling, and filled the room with the glowing warmth and light of the blazing coals.

She expected her father about two o'clock, but it was quite three when she saw him coming very slowly up the hill. Timothy Buchan walked at his side, and Annie noticed—even before they reached the house—the anger in her father's face and manner, and the air of solicitude with which Buchan regarded him. At the gate Brodick put a crown into Buchan's hand, and said, "Thank you, Tim. You did me a good turn. I'll not be forgetting it."

"I am owing you many god turns, Deacon. I'm not forgetting them."

During this pause Annie stood looking at her

father with distress and astonishment. His massive form was radiating wrath, and the stormy look in his eyes, and the suppressed passion in his close-drawn lips and lowering brow, frightened her. He was also deathly pale, and there was a streak of blood down the white linen of his shirt front. At the house door he looked at her with a passionate pity, and passed through it without a word. She turned in after him, her heart sinking and sick, and looked into his face with a silence full of inquiry. But as it brought her no answer, she asked, "Have I done anything to anger you, father? Why don't you speak to me?"

"Sit down, Annie, I have bad news for you. I am not angry at you, in particular, but I am sorely angry at you in the general. For you have brought this sorrow on yoursel', by your ain free choice and will, and against the choice and will o' a father that was wiser than you, and who loved you with a love that had no selfishness in it."

"I am understanding well enough that all these words mean something against poor Roy. Folks will not let the lad alone."

"Roy should let alone what he had nothing to do with. Let me tell you, there is more trouble in the village than words can sort. I have had to put my ain body between Will and Roy Morrison, or Will

would have thrashed his brother soundly—and weel he deserves it.”

Annie did not utter a word. Her eyes were dropped; she seated herself in a chair beside the table, and her father noticed that she grasped the edge for further support. He watched her for a moment and then continued—

“What do you think, Annie, o’ a man who opens a letter, not his, and then keeps it all o’ ten days, without saying word or witten about it?”

“Who has done the like o’ that?”

“Roy Morrison has done it.”

“How do folks know the truth o’ such a charge? Is there not some mistake? Oh, father—father!”

“There is no mistake, Annie. Lucky Hislop gave it to Roy. It was from the McBrines o’ Glasgow, it was closed with their big seal, that has a ship in full sail on it. Lucky saw the name Morrison on the letter, and Roy happened in on the minute, and she asked if it was for him, and he said, ‘Thank you, Lucky, it is all right,’ and so went awa’ with it. And it was all wrong, for the letter was Will’s letter, and Roy must have known that as soon as he opened it—if not before.”

“Well, then?”

“No, it is not well, it is bad as can be. Will

has lost the position he was seeking—and it is a big loss—one that may cripple the lad's whole life."

"How did Will find all this out?"

For a moment the Deacon did not answer. His eyes were fixed on his child. Her face was white as death, and the few words which framed her question were shivered from between her lips, rather than spoken. He laid his hand on the trembling one, which had fallen from its grasp of the table, and asked—

"Annie, my dear lass, do you want me to stop telling you?"

"No! No!" she cried with a sudden agonizing sob—"tell me the last, and the worst o' it."

"It was this way, then. This morning Will got a letter from the McBrines saying, 'that as he had not accepted their proposal, they concluded it was not satisfactory, and had made other arrangements'; they spoke of waiting eight days for his reply, and regretted 'he had not thought it worth his while to say, "yes" or "no" to their offer.' And nothing will put that bit o' neglect right. It shuts McBrine's door in Will's face forever. I'll stop, if you want me to, Annie."

"Go on—go on."

“As soon as Will read this letter he went in a passion to poor Lucky, and she cried, and told him she had given that very letter to his brother Roy ten days syne, and ‘Surely, man,’ she cried, ‘it was safe in your ain brother’s hand.’ Then, as ill-luck would have it, Roy passed her door, and she called him in and reminded him of it.”

“And—and what did Roy say?—Oh, father——”

“Roy denied all about the letter. He said he never saw a letter for Will, and Lucky got to screaming, and the two lads to words, and ill-words, and then to blows, and there was like to be real murder done, when Providence sent me that way, and I put mysel’ between them; and got a blow on my head that has given me a sair pain, but nobody is heeding that—if it be not Tim Buchan.”

“Father, I’ll never forgive the man who struck you.”

“Parfect nonsense! The blow was an accident! I got it in the scuffle. In a way, I deserved it, for if you get into another man’s boat, you must look to get your fingers or your head broken. But this or that, the village is boiling like the sea wi’ a school o’ herring, and some say Will has been o’er hasty, and others say he did what was well and right. God knows.”

"Do you mean to tell me, father, that Will did not know about the letter until this afternoon?"

"Not until two hours ago—hardly that itself."

Then Annie's face flushed scarlet. Confused, shaken, lifted off her feet by this revelation of her lover's lying treachery, she did not shrink or compromise, or slide away from the truth. A moment or two she hesitated, while she looked unswervingly on the shameful facts. Then she asked—

"Do you think, father, that Roy took and kept his brother's letter?"

"You may give him the benefit of the doubt, if you can, Annie. I am not caring to say what I think. I do not like Roy Morrison, so I would be a hard judge. Some were doubting if Roy would dare to do the like—and so on——"

"I have not a doubt of Roy's guilt," she answered. "He told me he took the letter. He showed it to me. He wanted me to read it."

"Annie Brodick!"

"I never touched it. I made him promise to go to his brother and ask his forgiveness. He told me last night that he had done so. He told me Will laughed, and said it was of no consequence. 'He lied to me. The man is as bad as you believe him to be, and I am a sorrowful woman this day. Maybe I

deserve the sorrow. I don't rightly know,—but I do know that I have a bitter, shameful heart-ache"—and she laid her head upon her arms and wept as if the restrained tears of her lifetime had suddenly been let loose, to drown and carry away as with a flood the broken promises, withered hopes, and slain love apparently doomed never to know fruition—apparently, because every sorrow has its horizon, none are illimitable—apparently, because God had not permitted that any diviner should find a sure mark about future events. Many times evil has brought good, and sorrow been full of strange joys and compensations.

Her father bent tenderly over the distracted girl. "Annie," he said, "my dear Annie, the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms—and I tell thee, when thy mother was dying, and I went with sinking heart through days and nights of pain and grief, never was Christ's love dearer, or his voice more sweet. Hearing it, I would have gone through flood and fire to kiss his feet—for only Heaven is better than to walk with Christ at midnight over sorrow's sea."

Annie shook her head despairingly, and he left her alone—alone in one of those dreary wastes made by the loved who have deceived and deserted us—

vacant places, watered by the bitterest tears human beings ever shed. She felt at that hour that all was over. All had been. Her love had turned to ashes, and the wind had carried it away. Up and down the past her soul wandered, finding little comfort, for in this sore strait her conscience told her plainly that "she had been deceived because she wished to be deceived."

All through that bitter night she sat dumb and motionless, without hope, and without comfort, her thoughts vaguely following up and down some words she had once heard her father say to a man in well-deserved calamity—

"Alick Sutor, the worst wounds we get we give oursel's, with our own hands, and God never lays on any man or woman such heavy burdens as they bind on their own shoulders."

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE BEGINNING OF FORGETFULNESS

FOR a few days the Deacon did not leave his home. He thought it best to keep out of the way of the Morrison boys, and away from the discussion of an incident so shameful, and yet which had a certain regrettable connection with his daughter. For he would be compelled to give his opinion regarding Roy's innocence or guilt in the affair, and he could not do this without also acknowledging that Roy had confessed the theft of the letter to Annie, and that she had given him three days' grace in which to repair the wrong as far as possible.

No one knew better than Robert Brodick that many would regard this kindness as a godless sympathy with the sinner; indeed, he was not sure that he himself quite acquitted her on this point. Those three days had been the fatal days of decision at McBrine's, and therefore Annie's prompt information would have probably saved Will's position. He found it hard to believe that a girl so just and truthful should for three days and nights hesitate between right and wrong.

On the fourth morning his anxiety about the mat-

ter made him resolve to question the doctor. "McFarlane will know all there is to know," he said to himself, "and I'll even give him the opportunity to speak this morning, for he is o'er clever a medical man to say the opening word."

But as it happened, McFarlane introduced the subject. "It was a nasty blow you got, Deacon; an inch to the right would have been serious—very serious indeed. Roy Morrison in his passion strikes hard."

"I am not laying the blow on Roy—exactly. There was more than one pair o' hands on either side, and I put mysel' in the thick o' the stramash. It was in the nature o' an accident, I'm thinking, Sir. Naebody would want to hurt me—why should they?"

"Just so. Why should they? I was seeing Roy Morrison an hour syne."

"It isn't possible! You must be mistaken. I was sure he would steal awa' as soon as the matter was discovered."

"Not he! Will left immediate. The poor lad thought an explanation would maybe put all right at McBrine's. I am doubting that. Lucky Hislop is in her bed; she's fretting hersel' into typhoid fever, I fear. I was seeing her early this morning. She swears she gave the letter to Roy, and Roy swears

himsel' black and blue that she did not give him the letter. Some folks, if you'll believe me, are taking Roy's part; and there is a design o' reporting the poor old woman to the government. If so, she will likely lose all her livelihood, for you know yoursel', Deacon, the government is as particular about its servants as Cæsar was about his wife—above suspicion is the rule, eh?"

"And Roy Morrison is still here? That is fair astonishment to me."

"As I said, he was here an hour ago—he is not here now."

"You said you saw him."

"Ay, I saw him going to the boat wi' Mrs. Lochrigg linking on his arm. My Lady Lochrigg looked as she was challenging the whole island. She held up her head—and a handsome head it is—and walked like the Queen o' Sheba. But if she had not been at the man's right hand, it would have gone vera unpleasantly wi' him. There were rotten eggs and blistering words waiting to give him a proper set-off; but Madame's stern face, and her do-if-you-dare manner, awed the lads into behaving themselves."

"That was like Sarah Lochrigg," answered Brodick with enthusiasm. "*Dod!* doctor, that woman has a heart of gold."

"She went on the boat with the lad, and in her own way won round the Captain; for he led her down the gangway wi' his ain hand, and stood wi' his bare head bidding her good-bye—and——"

"I wouldn't wonder," interrupted Brodick," he sailed wi' Captain Lochrigg when he was nothing but a laddie."

"Weel, Mistress Lochrigg went up the street after the parting wi' her head in the stars; and I have no doubt in her heart the certainty that her precious nephew would be treated wi' respect by every one on *The Lady Mary*, if the Captain had any say-so on his own ship. Deacon, you are right, Sarah Lochrigg is a wonderful woman within her own bounds."

"Did you hear where Roy was going? Glasgow, I suppose?"

"No, no! He is too well known there. He is going to Edinburgh."

"Who told you that story?"

"Jean McKenzie, and what Jean McKenzie does not know, has not yet been thought of."

"I wouldn't wonder if Jean is right. The lads have an uncle there, a well-to-do watchmaker and jeweler—a man that is the very marrow o' his sister Sarah—but what for did he wait so long? Why did he not go at once?"

The Deacon asked this question with some anxiety. Had Roy waited to see Annie? Had he seen Annie? Such an idea he could hardly take into his mind, and yet—yet—a woman loving so deeply and tenderly, might be led to forget manifest duty through an overwhelming pity, grounding itself in a passionate spiritual anxiety for the soul of the Beloved One. So he asked with eyes full of wistful solicitude—"Why did he not go at once? This is the fourth day. What was he doing here?"

"Nobody got sight o' him, though he was weel watched for. He was hiding in his aunt's house, and she was busy, here and there, raising some ready money for the miserable creature."

"Sarah has plenty o' lying money o' her own. I'm not understanding Sarah Lochrigg borrowing money."

"She has more than plenty, but Sarah is a wonderful woman for investing. As soon as she has an idle twenty pounds, off it goes somewhere, to be earning its interest. And she had just sent away every shilling she could spare. She borrowed one hundred pounds from Lawyer Galt, and I have no doubt the lad has taken every bawbee o' the hundred away in his pouch. It is a quite utterly unspeakable business!"

"But if you will notice, doctor, there is generally something very good in everything very bad. Roy Morrison's wickedness—saying the lad is guilty—opened freely Mrs. Lochrigg's close purse, and her love for the lad got the better even of her love for honest gold. It was the hardest test you could put to her religion, and thank God! it went to the bottom and extremity o' things, and did not fail. She is fond o' money—we all know that—but when the heart and the purse run over at the same time, there is no fear o' us putting gold before God."

"I am thinking your word will be required on the matter, Brodick."

"Not at all. Not at all. I have neither opinions nor advices to give. I could not say this or that without hurting Annie's feelings, and I'll not do that in any case."

"Private and personal, you mean, of course. But this case is bound to come before the Kirk, and then what will you say? Roy Morrison's name ought to be blotted out o' our Kirk's membership, and reasons given of course, and who can say more, or more truly, than yoursel'?"

"I will not vote to blot any name off the Kirk book. While a righteous God can thole the man on the face o' the earth, we can surely thole his name in

the Kirk's minutes. And if God takes him off the earth, he is beyond our say-so—clean and forever beyond our judgment."

"I was hearing that the ne'er-do-weel confessed to you, or to your daughter, that he got the letter."

"If it were so, confessions are sacred things. But I am free to say that I never heard a word o' confession from Roy Morrison. You can ask Annie Brodick the question, if you wish. Yes, or no, she will tell you the truth."

"Good gracious man! Do you think a lover would tell the lass he loved such a despicable, disgraceful-like thing anent himself? If he did, he would be a mortal idiot, and I mysel' would send him to Gartsherrie Asylum on this evidence alone."

"Roy was no idiot about his own affairs. I want to know who said anything about the Kirk taking cognizance o' the matter?"

"Elder Ruthven. He thought you would sift the circumstance to the last atom o' truth and falsehood."

"You may tell Elder Ruthven I will say neither yes nor no about it."

"It might be your duty to speak, Brodick."

"Evil deeds are none the worse if they be passed

by in discreet silence. Moving in muddy water, only makes it muddier."

"You may be right, Deacon, but if it were well looked into, I fear this passing by o' transgressions would be found to be a bit o' rank Arian heresy—a thing to be held in utter abomination."

"McFarlane, you are simply a ferocious Calvinist."

"There is a great falling away, Deacon, in this respect; and the talk o' Dr. Balmuto among our fisher folk about the general, ay, the universal mercy of God, has done a deal o' harm; and most taken the fear o' God from them. So it behooves the faithful to keep a strict watch o'er such loose 'general' doctrine. Calvinism lives in the Eternal Order, and the Eternal Order can never fail."

"Weel, weel, McFarlane, you and I will never pull at opposite ends of the rope—no fear o' that."

"Just so. I thought it right to testify so far. No offence was meant, Brodick," and he pushed his big hand across the table, and touched Brodick's hand. Then they smiled and nodded—that mutual nod brimming over with friendly confidence. No words were needed after it, and McFarlane rose, and Brodick went to the door, and watched his friend out of sight. He was a large, uncouth man, with a plain,

rough face, an irresistible will, and a domineering temper. Not a popular man, but Brodick understood and liked him.

"McFarlane is ugly every way you take him, and there is more than enough of him," said Elder Bruce one night after a stormy session.

"Ay," answered Brodick, "but he is a man all through, and when he is particularly hot and overbearing, Bruce, he is just humanity on fire. Somehow, I'm liking him best of all then."

As he turned from the door, Annie entered the room. She was very pale, and there were dark shadows under her eyes, and darker shadows still over that inner life which is, after all, the real life. For had everything been well there, Annie would have been rosy and happy, and full of hope and song. She asked after her father's wound, and told him dinner was nearly ready, "And I have made you the beef-steak pudding you like so well," she added, "and I am hoping you can eat it to-day, father."

"To be sure I can, dearie." Then as she moved about doing in a silent, listless way the duties that fell to her, he began to wonder whether it would be well to tell her Roy had left, or better to let the trouble lie in silent neglect. When dinner was over he was still uncertain what to do, but Annie herself

opened the subject. She was sitting opposite to him on the hearth, and was quite unoccupied. For she had put out of her sight the useless wedding garments, and her empty hands had a pathetic meaning to the sorrowful father. They looked even more desolate than her face.

"Did you hear tell, father, that Roy had gone? He will fret you no more now."

"McFarlane told me so."

"Then it is true. Kirsty heard it when she went for milk, I was not sure o' the report."

"It is certainly true. He has gone to an uncle in Edinburgh. His aunt went to the boat with him."

"Well she might. It was a poor job she made in the bringing up o' Roy."

"It is Roy's own fault. He had the same bringing up as his brother."

"The same, just so; and that was where the mischief began. Roy required a different bringing up, a tighter hand, a more positive way. I mind Marion Balmuto saying that some souls seemed to come here ready-made—like Will's—and others came in the rough as it were, being purposely sent for schooling and discipline—that was what Roy wanted, and he never got it. Sarah Lochrigg was not fit to up-bring boys—if she had been, God would have given

her them; then what for did she go and help herself from other folks' little ones? I am blaming her for all that has happened."

She spoke petulantly, and with a kind of angry assertion, and her father watched her with an understanding pity. At first, she had been overwhelmed by the fear that her disregard of her father's feelings, and her refusal to take his advice, was the root and the fruit of Roy's shameful trouble. But Brodick knew that no one accepts the whole blame for mischance or misdoing for long; there is a peremptory disposition to throw a good share on some one else, and Annie had chosen Mrs. Lochrigg as the chief delinquent in Roy's case.

"God help her," mused the troubled father, "she would blame me mysel' if there was no one else ready;" and with the thought there came to him the certainty, though unconfessed as yet, that Annie really did hold him guilty. Had she not asked him to share his business and home with Roy? He had refused. But what if he had acted differently? And as soon as he put this question to himself, he knew that Annie had asked and answered it, according to her own feelings and desires.

It was an invisible barrier between them, all the more so, that neither spoke of it; the Deacon, be-

cause he thought it an almost brutally selfish demand, Annie, because she was aware of its speciousness and injustice, and knew her claim must vanish before her father's inviolable right; and the few strong words in which he would defend that right. And she felt averse to give up this grievance. It was her last resort, when day after day she hoped for a letter and none came; when she was sick at heart, and her head ached, and all her life had lost its savor, when she could find no excuse for Roy's neglect, she could at least fall back on her father's cruelty to him.

"But the poor lad was feared for father," she would whisper to herself, "or things might have been so different; all Roy wanted was a lift up, and father would not give him it—well, well, if my dear mother had been alive, all would have been different—and Roy is not knowing what I suffer—or caring—nobody cares—why should they when my own father doesn't heed?"

Then would follow that fatal luxury of self-pity which makes the soul sink back upon itself and retire from all affections.

So to the Deacon and his daughter the Spring brought little pleasure, and the Summer widened the breach. For the father had then the reasonable

excuse of increased business and he came to his unhappy home as little as possible during the six days of the week, and on the Sabbath hid himself in that pavilion of solemn silence, which Annie, unreasonable as she was, would not profane with her earthly love-sorrow. This condition came very gradually about. At first Brodick showed a wonderful sympathy for his child; he respected her desire for solitude, and took pains to keep from her the numerous instances of Roy's want of honesty and honor, which every day, for some time after his departure, came to public discussion.

However, the most perfect patience has its limit, and one day when the herring season was over, and the wheat reaped, and the Winter closing in upon them, he became irritated at her nursing grief for a man so unworthy. Her pale face, her eyes red with weeping, and her listless melancholy manner were wrongs that he felt it hard to bear.

He laid down his spoon, pushed his soup plate aside, and looking with displeasure at her said, "Roy Morrison's boat was sold to-day."

"What right had anyone to sell Roy's boat?"

"It was sold to help the payment of his debts. He left little else behind him."

"He left one true heart that loves him."

"What does he care for any true heart? Not so much as a penny postage stamp. Now, Annie Brodick, I'll have no crying at my dinner board. I'm tired to death of your tears—or the shadow of them. Be done with your selfish sorrow, for a ne'er-do-well that isn't worth one thought from any good woman."

"Father, I will——"

"You will be quiet till I get through what I have got to say. All your childhood and girlhood you were noted for your extraordinary self-restraint. Pain couldn't win a tear from your eyes, nor disappointment; ay, you stood at your mother's coffin dry-eyed. Now, what for are you crying yourself blind for a perfect blackguard? And though it be but a secondly consideration—why are you making me the most homeless and miserable man in Arran? I'll have no more of such sinful ways. I say 'sinful' because sorrow like you breed, comes from the devil—no good heart, loving and trusting God, would give it five minutes' lodgment."

"I did not think you cared whether I was happy or not. And you might have saved both yourself and me this trouble, and perhaps Roy his transgression, if you would only have taken the poor lad by the hand, and given him the right place of a son-in-

law. But little you cared for Roy's welfare, or my happiness."

"Oh! that is the sore in your heart. I thought so. Little you cared for my happiness, when you wanted me to danger my business with a thief at the till and the books. Little indeed you cared for my happiness, when you would have let such a miserable creature on my hearth, and at my board, and made him chief in all your love and care even before my eyes, and in my ears, morning, noon and night. I would have been without a home on your wedding day, and in less than a year's go-by I would have been without a business."

"You just took a hatred of Roy, and that without any reason at first."

"Annie, I don't tell you all my reasons for what I say or do. Plenty other folk hated him. It was hard to sell his boat. No one wanted it after him. At last Bob Mullen gave two pounds for the unlucky thing. 'It will whamle o'er, or go to the bottom,' he said, 'but life's a poor, bad business for Roy Morrison and mysel', and I'll gie two pounds to win decently out o' it.' "

"I am ashamed at you, father, repeating anything Bob Mullen said. He was drunk, of course; he is always drunk."

"Sober enough to get a can o' paint from Joe Lindsey, and paint out your name, and put Maggie Flett's in its place. Well then, that is the last o' *The Bonnie Annie*."

"I am glad if it. That boat was the first of the trouble. The unlucky thing may go to matches on any rock she likes. What for are you telling me this news? It isn't like you."

"Because when the body is requiring the surgeon's knife, the doctor isn't the help needed. I have said kind words to you, and kept ill news from you, month after month, and you are neither sensible o' the kindness nor better o' the ignorance. So from this hour, I will tell you the truth, and the whole o' it."

"That was, and is, your duty. I am no bairn."

"You are a most ungrateful woman."

"I am a very sorrowful woman. If my mother was alive——"

"She would have sorted you long before this. Do you think you are the only girl that ever made an idol of a man and then found him clay? Think shame o' yoursel, for crying o'er a general calamity that women have had to thole ever since the world began. Now I have something to tell you. The Rev. Mr. Saunders is to have a great installment a

week from next Sabbath Day. There will be four famous ministers there, the Moderator o' the Kirk of Scotland likely being one o' them. A grand, gracious occasion it will be, and we—the baith o' us—are bid to witness it. Think o' it! An invite to the Minister's ain house! Will you behave yoursel' and go with me?"

"To Mr. Saunders installation? No. I cannot go, even if I wanted to go—and I do not want to go."

"Why can't you go?"

"I have no fitting clothes to wear."

"You made yoursel' some very bonnie gowns not so long since."

"I made them for my wedding, and I will never put one o' them on me for a less occasion. Marion Balmuto will likely be there, and in the height, and length, and breadth o' the fashion. I am not wanting to go, father—in any case. You might know that."

"As you cannot take a Godsend o' pleasuring with a good heart, I'm not wanting you to go. Your unhappy face would be a discomforture to every one there. Forbye, I would be fairly ashamed to have Mr. Saunders see you, for when he asked you to be——"

“Mrs. Saunders.”

“Ay, Mrs. Saunders—a great honor if you had had your senses at the time—you were a perfect beauty; a lovely, healthy, happy girl on the sunny side o’ eighteen years old. Now, you are withered and haggard, and look thirty at the least—and your beauty is washed away, and you’re as crabbit as an auld maid o’ fifty. I would hate Mr. Saunders to see the change. I used to be the proudest father in Scotland, full o’ the glory o’ your sweetness, and your fine looks. I am not proud o’ you now. I would just as leave, and rather, go to Glasgow without you. I’m not caring for folks pitying me.”

“Father, it is a shame—a cruel shame—to speak to me in such a belittling way. I am neither old nor ugly yet. You use your power very meanly, to say I am. No one would dare to talk to me so insultingly—but you.”

“I am judging from observation—mine own, and others. There are no sweethearts coming up to Brodick house these days.”

“That is my own fault—and yours.”

“Mine?”

“Yes. You don’t know how to treat a decent lad properly. You are aye feared they are going to wrong you, some way or other. No one will go

where they are suspicioned, whatever they say, or do. What do I want with sweethearts? I have promised Roy Morrison to be his wife. I'll not break that promise."

"Annie, I have let you talk back to me this time. I had my reasons. Now listen to me. I am going to Glasgow by mysel', and when I come back, I'll be expecting to find the house clean and bright and cheerful, as it used to be. You'll drop no more tears into my food, and you'll croon no more bewailing laments in my house-place. If one love has played you a mean, false trick, try and do your plain duty to the true love, that is still yours; and if you don't have the thing you want, make the best, and the happiest, of the things you do have. Let me tell you——"

"No, no! Stop, father."

"Not yet. Let me tell you, the house has not been as clean and tidy lately as it used to be; and many things have been out of their usual time and place—and I may make the observe—that I distrust women to whom dust and disorder is of no consequence. There is something wrong with their spiritual life. Your soul, as well as my house, needs inquiring after. I could say more——"

"You have said enough—too much, father. And

I see Sarah Lochrigg coming. I cannot see her. I could not endure her talk—let me go, father. I'll try and do better."

Brodict made no objections, and Annie slipped upstairs as Mrs. Lochrigg entered the house. She was much excited and had a letter in her hand. It was from Mr. Saunders, and Sarah was much flattered by his attention.

"I shall lay the letter on the very top o' my card basket," she laughed. "It is the same as a bill o' good moral health, for folks can't say an ill word of a woman with a minister's own invitation so prominent. Are you going, Robert?"

"Ay, but Annie is dour against going. She says she will stay at home."

"She is right."

"Right! What for is she right?"

"For more reasons than I can give you now. And if they are not already staring you in the face, there is no use trying to make you see them. I would not go a step, if I was Annie, so I know she is right, reason or no reason."

"I wish you would talk to her, wisely and kindly, Sarah; I have taken the upper hand with her to-day, and she is feeling it."

"You ought to have done so long since."

"Maybe I ought. When I am away call her downstairs, and make her listen to you. One woman ought to know what to say to another. I am either too rough or too kind."

"Robert, you will require to get a new suit of blacks."

"I know. I am going to Johnston's about it now."

"Man Robert! Buy a ready-made suit in Glasgow. It will be city-like. Johnston's cuts are terribly countrified. You have a fine figure, get a ready-made suit to fit it."

Brodict straightened himself and threw back his shoulders, and Sarah smiled at the vanity of the man. But Brodict did not accept her advice. "Ready-made clothes!" he snorted scornfully. "I wouldn't put them on my back. As you say, Sarah, I have a good figure, and I'll have my clothes made to fit it. Will you get a new dress for the occasion, Sarah?"

"Me! I see mysel' spending twenty pounds on little Saunders' installation. No, no! I shall send my 'regrets' and keep the sovereigns where they will be doing their duty, and earning a few bawbees. Now run awa', Robert, and order your breeks, and your coat, and your waistcoat o' black satin, for I

know there is no joy to men-folks like a special service, wi' a presbytery o' ministers to conduct it."

"You see I was one o' Mr. Saunders' deacons."

"Excuses are not in order. Go your ways to the tailors, and I'll call Annie down, and see what I can make o' her."

She watched Brodick outside the gate, and then went to the stair foot and called—"Annie Brodick! Annie Brodick!" At first, Annie did not answer, but Sarah's insistence at length compelled her recognition. She came down slowly, and showed a face wan and wretched-looking. "You poor bit lassie!" cried Sarah. "Whatever is wrong wi' you?"

"Father and I have had a few words, and I think he was unkind beyond everything."

"Men are always either unkind or too kind. They have neither sense nor mense. We will talk the matter o'er between ourselves, but first, Annie, give me a cup o' your tea. No one can infuse a pot o' tea like Annie Brodick. You are the best tea-maker in the whole town."

"There is a deal in the kind o' tea, Sarah. Father sends the very best home—six and sixpence a pound at the least—and whiles even higher."

"Yes, but you have—*the way!* Your mother had it likewise. It's a gift, Annie."

And Annie was flattered and pleased, and called for boiling water, and made the tea, bringing, almost cheerfully, with her own hands sugar and cream, and a few sweet crackers "just to nibble at."

"It is an extraordinary solace, Annie," said the elder woman, sipping her Young Hyson deliberately. Her feet rested on the steel fender, and her black cashmere dress was carefully folded back over her knees, lest the heat should injure it. "Now, Annie," she continued, "what is it between you and your good father? Tell Aunt Sarah—for you used always to call me aunt—and I am sure I couldn't have been nearer or dearer to your mother if we had been twins in one household."

"I know that, Aunt Sarah. Roy is between father and myself—nothing else."

"Then let me tell you, Roy must step out. He is just a troubler of families. He has now his uncle's household at sixes and sevens, and he has got his dismissal in consequence. Annie Brodick, you must forget Roy."

"I cannot forget—forgetting is the death of your heart, and I love Roy yet."

"I love him also."

"Then do you forget him?"

"There is no occasion for me to forget him. I can please myself who or what I love. You can't."

"Why not?"

"You are yet under authority. Your father's house is not yours, and it is a sin to fill anybody's home with sighing and weeping. Wait until you have your own house, then, if you like, you can make complaining places of every room in it."

"If Roy had had any kind of justice——"

"He would likely have been in prison ere this time. He has had mercy instead—and little good it has done him. He is in a peck o' trouble, even now."

"What is wrong now?"

"Women, in the first place—making love to his cousins Betty and Jennie at the same time, and confidences between sisters, of course, and the cat out o' the bag, and the father furious, and the mother crying, and the two girls quarreling with one another. He says they made love to him, but there, who knows?"

"I have no doubt Roy is right. He sends you letters—he has never written me a word. That is what breaks my heart."

"Roy's letters to you would mean nothing—only a few silly words without truth in them. The only

letters he writes sincerely are those in which he asks for money. But it is not of Roy I want to speak. He is out of your life. You can no more bring back the past than you can tie cobwebs, or mend bubbles. It is your father who is now important, for he has come to a turning point which taken wrong may mean sorrow for both o' you."

"What do you mean, Aunt Sarah?"

"He is sick of his home, the way you keep it this past year, and I am wondering mysel' at his extraordinary patience. But patience has grown to impatience, and if you do not walk your shoes straighter, you will be forced to walk out of all the pleasant paths of your past life."

"Do say plainly what you want to say, Sarah. I am not understanding you."

"In plain words then, your father will take him a wife to keep his home as he wants it kept. There are two rather nice widow women even now setting their white caps and streamers for his favor, not to speak o' Miss Grizelda Binnie, the maiden lady of Beech bank."

"Who are the widows?"

"First, the Widow McLean, who is well-to-do, and who stands high in the Kirk; and second, pretty Leslie Kerr, who is sonsie and merry, and not over

forty years old. Miss Binnie in her pony carriage is at your father's shop most every day. She has three hundred pounds a year, and thinks hersel' the topping stone o' religion and gentility. I have watched them all three, Annie, and I know well they are all three desiring to be Mistress Brodick. And mind this, my dearie, your father is only a man, that is to say, he is a vain creature, well-conceited o' his own parfections."

"Aunt Sarah, if you would marry father, I would like that."

"Me marry! No, no child! I know a thing or two beyond marrying—that bit o' foolishness is for bairns in wisdom and experience. I have been my own mistress too long, to have any man body calling me up and down the house, and wanting this, that, and the other thing; for it is untelling what you may have to do for the best o' them."

"Father thinks so highly of you, Aunt."

"Ay, he has often said so, but I am out o' the question. One thing is sure, you may soon have to consider whether it will be Widow McLean, or Leslie Kerr, or that upsetting Grizelda Binnie, who will be set o'er you. For I tell you, it will be one o' the three, if you do not study your father's comfort more, and better."

“Father has whiles a very trying way.”

“Trying way! every man has a trying way o’ his own, but it is next to the chief end of a daughter to find it out, and humor it. If you don’t do it, Annie, some other woman will, I’m telling you. Even now, you are a speculation to the women in their gossiping—they are aye wondering and discussing how this or the other step-mother would treat you; for it is a well known fact that a girl who gets a step-mother, gets a step-father at the same time.”

“Father would allow no one to treat me badly.”

“That’s a problem—we won’t discuss it. But you have yet some opportunity left to regain your place; be busy about it, for opportunities have usually a short life. Do as I tell you—it is better and easier to humble yoursel’ to your father than to some strange usurping woman.”

“I know. Oh yes, I know. But I have done nothing wrong. Why then should I humble myself?”

“You have done wrong every day o’ the last year, and every hour o’ the day.”

“Aunt Sarah!”

“Ay, have you, but there’s none so hard to convince of a fault as they who know themselves in

the wrong. One o' the prime duties of the mistress of any home is the duty o' the cheerful morning face, and your own servant lass told me you came down wi' woesome looks and weary eyes, and hardly able to speak, day after day. A nice, cheerful companion you must be at any breakfast table! It is a sin and a shame to begin your own days in a way like that. It is a cruel offence, an unpardonable wrong, to continually send your father into the world's fight with gloom and discontent, and everything to discourage him. You have kept up a moral drizzle, Annie, month after month, until you have broken the spirit of the best man God ever made. Will you now turn round, and do as I advise you?"

"If father would bring back Roy."

"He will not, and he ought not. I have come to see that no human being can help Roy. He must go to the schools of suffering and poverty. He must prove the folly o' his own way by trials sore and many."

"Aunt, Aunt, do not spae ill fortune to him. How can you?"

"Give Roy up, even in your thoughts. Do not ruin your life, and your father's life, for him. He will be taken care of by *Them* who will guide him

wisely, where we have guided him foolishly. Will you leave him with *Them?*”

“How can I?”

“Weel, I have told you the truth. If you wish to steep yoursel’ a while longer in this brine o’ your ain salting, do so. I’ll say no more. Dear knows, I am sorry for you, but I’ll be going. I’m little use here. I see that.”

“You have done more than you think, Aunt Sarah. I may turn the leaf straight over. I will have no woman here in my place.”

“That is right. And dress yoursel’ a bit bonnier. Your father is gey fond o’ a bright ribbon, and a happy smile to marrow it. Upon my word, Annie, very little pleases him, and you have the ball in your hand. Think the matter over. Could you go with your father to the installation?”

“I have no dress fitting.”

“Say you had a dress?”

“I could not go. Don’t you understand?”

“Ay, I think I do. Good-bye, Annie! I am your friend, whatever comes or goes.”

CHAPTER NINE

A LITTLE TOO LATE

CAUTIOUS, both by birth and lifelong training, it cannot be supposed that Annie was indifferent to the news Mrs. Lochrigg had brought her, and the advice she had given. She went to her room to consider it point by point. In the first place she accepted its truthfulness without demur; there was no question of its reliability. Her father's intention of marriage, and Roy's infidelity to herself, were two facts not to be disputed. What then was the best way to receive or to combat them?

It struck her as strange that her father's defection hurt her the most acutely, and also assumed the first and highest importance. How was this? Was she forgetting Roy? Was he less dear to her? Certainly, her father's threatened marriage put aside the tragic delay of her own. The circumstance troubled her. Was she beginning to forget! She resolved to remember Roy specially, every time the clock struck, and she did not comment upon the fact

that she was telling her heart to do what it had hitherto done itself.

She knew the three women who were intriguing for her father and her home, and she liked none of them. Pretty Leslie Kerr was the least objectionable, but Annie had always felt her assumption of youth and beauty to be ridiculous. She had no wrinkles, and no grey hairs, and she knew how to hide her years with demurely fetching gowns and neckwear. She would certainly teach her father the meaning of it all—in cash.

“And I would have to outdress her, no matter what it cost,” reflected Annie, “and if father likes that kind of rivalry in his home, we two could give him enough of it. As for Miss Grizel Binnie,” she continued, “I could manage her. I would just need to pet her lap dogs, and tell her she was aristocratic-looking—two things I would not do under any circumstances; and for the Widow McLean I have not one likelihood. I simply would not live under the same roof with her, and to sit at the same table with Christy McLean three times every day is an unthinkable situation—well, then, Annie Brodick, what are you going to do?”

She asked herself this question audibly, and in the stress of feeling it evoked, unconsciously stood

up to answer it. "I am not going to leave father and home for any one of these three women. I can make much of Robert Brodick, as well as they can. I can dress beyond any of them, and I have youth and beauty, though father did say I was withered and haggard, and looked thirty years old—he knew better—well he knew better, and I'll show him that I'm on the right side of twenty yet. Then I can make the house-place brighter than any he finds elsewhere, and for my mother's sake, and my own sake, I'll give father no excuse for putting Leslie Kerr, or Grizel Binnie, or that tawpie Aggie McLean in her place."

As soon as this decision was reached she ran downstairs, made the house-place cozy and bright and warm, hurried back to her room, crimped and curled her hair, and put on her ruby-colored merino, with its velvet trimmings and ivory-shaded lace, that her father like best of all her dresses.

These homely duties left her no time to consider Roy's love-making to his cousins; she put that trouble aside until the night hours would lawfully give her solitude. Then she prepared the tea-table and watched for her father's home-coming. When he was at the garden gate she tapped on the window, and smiled a welcome as she had been used to do

before the trouble about Roy came, and though her smile was not answered, she did not allow herself to drop below the pitch she had resolved to live at.

But as it often happens—when we resolve to be good and kind—circumstances are against us. The Deacon had left the house angry with his daughter, and her apparent cheerfulness was something of an offence. Did she intend to show him how easily she could put his displeasure aside? And was his unusual scolding a thing of so little consequence that it might be passed over without one word of sorrow from the delinquent who had made him suffer so much for so long? No, Annie was making too little of her faults. He wanted his prodigal daughter to confess her sins against him, and acknowledge that she had abused his love and long-suffering, and then—then certainly, he would kiss and forgive her. Alas, Annie had forgotten this preliminary to restored affection, so her father was depressed and silent, and almost irresponsible to all her attempts at conversation.

The Deacon was, in fact, yielding to that most ordinary of domestic temptations—getting cross as others grow kind. Fortunately Annie understood the mood of her father. Had she not seen her mother master it under all kinds of conditions? And

still more enlightening was the fact that she personally had given way to it, and for months repelled loyal and loving advances by its chilling attitude of unpardonable wrong and ill-usage. She therefore accepted the retaliation and made the best of it.

So until the Deacon's departure for the installation, a kind of April weather, gloom and sunshine, prevailed. Both earnestly desired to restore the old and happy conditions, but the temperature of household life is about as uncertain as the temperature of the weather. And just at this time the Deacon was anxious about many things—he was making out a list for his Spring purchases—he was writing directions for his clerks to meet all the exigencies he thought probable—he had many good-bye calls to make—and his new suit had to be sent back for alterations, and did not finally reach him until he was ready to leave for Glasgow. During the next ten days Annie fully realized that she had forced changes in her life that made it almost impossible to bring back the peaceful, pleasant conditions she had so foolishly allowed to drift away.

The Deacon was to be a week or more in Glasgow, and Annie spent the time in renovating the house, and in a thorough examination of herself and her possible outlook. There was tumult and rebellion

in her soul, and the bitterness with which she peered into the shadowy way before her cannot be expressed by any word or sign. That this trouble was mainly her own fault, made the searching inquiries no easier. And as to Roy, she still loved him, though Sarah Lochrigg had insisted on her reading his uncle's letter setting forth Roy's misdoings. She did so, and gave it back with the remark, "We have only one side of the story, Aunt; Roy ought to be heard also." "You are an unconvinced lassie," replied Mrs. Lochrigg, and Annie shrugged her shoulders and turned away, for Love laughs at evidences.

Sarah was helping her with the house, and very hard both women worked to make it as beautiful as fresh white paint and new muslin curtains and many pretty accessories could do; while Sarah's oversight of the cleaning women insured that exquisite spotlessness of every cupboard, nook and corner, which compelled all who entered the house to smile and sigh with pleasure, or perhaps ejaculate, "How fresh! How sweet the place is!" And it was fresh and sweet as the pansies and hyacinths that filled the window shelves. The place fitted the flowers, and the flowers fitted the place, and what more can be said?

During the day, and the labor it brought, Annie kept cheerful, but the loneliness of the night hours revealed clearly to her that she had herself passed a line she could never re-cross. She was not yet twenty, but all the spontaneous mirth, and all the unconscious love of motion, characteristic of joyous youth, was gone; and she could neither recall nor imitate it. For any soul that has suffered Love's sorrow is awakened forever to the melancholy side of things. It has undergone the earth, and the heaven-touched carelessness and fearlessness of childhood have passed out of the possibilities of future life.

Yet it was with loving words and a beaming smile Annie met her father on his return; and this time her efforts to win him met a full reward. He was delighted with his renovated home, and his rejuvenated daughter. He praised both without stint, and ate with joyful heart the good meal Annie had prepared for him. He had had a charming visit, and was full of content and satisfaction. The big Kirk, the famous ministers, the great congregation, the handsome manse, the Minister's mother, and the wonderfully fine meals she served, were the topics of conversation that never seemed to weary him.

They soon wearied Annie, however, for she saw

plainly that her father had not given up the hope that she would yet marry Mr. Saunders. This event seemed to the Deacon so desirable, so almost natural, he could not but believe in its final certainty. During this visit he had also found time to renew his friendship with Dr. Balmuto, and Marion had sent Annie a loving letter and a pair of gold bracelets, and asked her to pay her a long visit. "She was engaged to Mr. Crieff," she said, "and she expected Annie to come and help her a little with her marriage outfit."

So quite a new element came into the Brodicks' life. Frequent letters were sent and received, and the Deacon began to visit the city with some kind of regularity. Annie also accepted the renewed offer of friendship gratefully; she knew that Marion would be a possible outgait if a step-mother should ever be set over her; and she wrote to her confidentially of the sorrow that had come to her through Roy, and of the still closer sorrow darkening her horizon.

As the weeks went on, the Deacon grew more and more infatuated with the Glasgow Sabbaths, and after every visit pleaded covertly, or openly, the desirability of Annie marrying the Minister; but with all a woman's contradiction she set herself against

him. She finally refused to show any pleasure in the Rev. Mr. Saunders' Kirk, or manse, or mother, though she really did enjoy her father's description of the fine dining-room, and the Minister's study, and the rich people whose worship he directed. "I am a bit weary of Mr. Saunders and his greatness, father," she would say; "I like better to hear o' the famous folk you meet at Dr. Balmuto's, and about Marion and Mr. Crieff. Has he still got 'The Settlement' on his brain or heart?"

"I fear it was just a passing experiment with him. There is nobody in the world but Marion Balmuto now—it is maybe a pity—one can't tell. I am not in favor of deviations in Kirk matters."

The Summer was not a very happy one. The Deacon's Glasgow friends were scattered, and he did not go much to the city. True, he got letters, and Annie could always tell when one had arrived. "We had Mr. Saunders, and all that belongs to him, for dinner and supper yesterday," she would complain to Mrs. Lochrigg, and that lady, sniffing angrily, would "wish Mr. Saunders in a better place than this world, and no harm in the wish," and would add, "for he is aye talking about its advantages and blessedness. Are you intending to marry the little man at the long last?"

"No, never! Have you heard anything of Roy, Aunt?"

"Not a word."

"Where is he?"

"God knows—no one else does."

"I am miserable about him."

"So am I, dearie."

"If Will was at home, he would find him."

"Ay, but Will is in the Chinese seas, and he is coming back by Australia. It may be a year ere Will wins home—and till he gets home he is bound to his ship."

"I know."

"What can we do?"

"Pray—and leave Roy to *Them*."

With the Autumn the Deacon's visits to Glasgow became more frequent, and on his return from one in the middle of October he said to Annie, "Mr. Saunders is going to be married. You are bid to the wedding."

"Mr. Saunders!"

"Ay. You have missed that fine opportunity, and you will never have another to match it."

She was much annoyed. She had been for three years so sure of this man's loyal affection, and perhaps there lay deep in her consciousness a thought,

a shadowy possibility, that she might some day, yet a long time off, listen to his wooing. And he had forgotten her. She laughed scornfully, and asked:

“What kind of a lassie is to wear my old shoes?”

“I have not seen her,” answered Brodick, “but his mother is fairly set up with her. She says she is bonnie enough, and only a young thing not eighteen years old. Her father has given her five thousand pounds as a set off.”

“She might have got more for her money. Is she a Glasgow girl?”

“Ay, but they met at St. Andrews. She was summering there, and he was on a visit to his old college. It had to be, I suppose. They are to be married in three weeks, and you will need a fine dress for the occasion.”

“I cannot go, father. Do not ask me. It is just impossible at this time.”

“Why at this time?”

“Roy disappeared last week. No one knows whether he is dead or alive.”

“What has he been doing now?”

“Father, why will you think wrong without reason? There is nothing against him.”

“Has Sarah heard from him?”

“Not yet. Her brother sent her word.”

"When did Roy go?"

"Go! Go where?"

"He must have gone somewhere."

"He may have been killed."

"Nonsense! Perfect nonsense!"

"Or killed himself. Sarah says he has had a deal of trouble lately."

"Trouble! naturally. I only hope when he is found, or heard tell of, that he won't bring more trouble to Sarah. I don't see what you have to do with that fellow's whereabouts. I am not liking you speaking his name in my presence. For any sake, don't begin another year's mourning. I can't thole it, Annie! I can't, and I won't! I saw as soon as I entered the door you were looking sick, and not like yoursel' again. And I'm telling you, that it is a sin and a shame to make yoursel' sick and auld-looking for a worthless, wicked man."

"He was my promised husband. I have a right to make myself sick and ugly for him, if I want to."

"You have not. The laws of the body—its health and happiness—are as much God's laws as any other. Forbye, if you even had the right to injure, and make yoursel' wretched, you have not the right to injure and make me wretched. Why was my house made beautiful, if you turn it into a place

of mourning and tears? Dust and ashes over everything would have been more fitting. And all for a man reprobate and contemptible, and not worth one loving thought from any good woman."

"I loved Roy. I love him yet."

Then the long-suffering father rose from the table, and in tones of passionate sorrow and anger cried aloud—"My God! My God! how can I bear this? It is too much! It is beyond all—but thy mercy." His voice broke, and at the last sentence fell to an intense whisper.

Annie was terrified. Never had she seen a man under such strain and excitement. In her father such emotion was an incredible thing. She ran to him, clung to him, and with words drowned in sobs begged him to forgive her. "I was a wicked woman to name my trouble," she said. "I have tried, oh, father, I have tried to forget it, for your sake. I will never speak that name again in your presence. I will not, father. I will be good, indeed I will! Come and finish your tea. If you do not, you will break my heart." She led him back to his chair, and with a kiss promised she would try and weep no more.

"Indeed, my dear lass," he answered, "if you knew all, you would be praying for him, instead of weeping after him."

"Let me tell you something, father, and then we will never name the subject again. Jane Forsyth told me yesterday that most people excused the taking of the letter. Some think it was only taken to tease his brother, but that when he found out Will was going to leave him, he kept the letter, to keep Will. Some think the evidence against him not clear. Lucky Hislop is old, nearly blind, and very lazy; perhaps Lucky——"

"Lucky is not to blame, the thief was his ain accuser to you."

"Yes, father, about that weary letter. But he told me positive, and offered to swear to it, that he did not blacken our name on Will's boat. I believe that he spoke the truth."

"I know that he lied, and it seems then, that he was ready to swear to the lie. I have the most positive evidence that he did black out the name o' Annie Brodick. I did not tell you of it, for you were in sair trouble at the time, and God knows, my dear bairn, I would not add a straw's weight to your sorrow."

"You were good to me, and patient with me, father, but now having said so much, you be to tell me all you know."

"Very weel, I will. Maybe it is the right time to do so. There is little good in saying smooth

words when the bitter truth is required. This, then, is the very truth, Annie:

“One day last Autumn I met the Widow Gibson coming to the house for me. She said her little Andrew was dying, and could not win away until he could speak with me. The poor lad, you ken, Annie, is an innocent, one o’ God’s bairns, and though he had little sense everybody loved him. I went with his mother to his bedside. He said he had done a great sin—the poor sinless laddie! and he wanted to put the wrong right, then he wouldna be feared that God would be angry wi’ him. And when I asked him what the wrong was, he confessed that he had watched Roy Morrison black his brother’s boat name, and had taken a big silver penny from Roy, not to tell any one about it. He said, too, that he was feared of Roy, who had threatened him with many awful deaths if he said a word. He then told where the big silver penny was hid, and asked me to put it in the Kirk plate for the poor. So his mother went for the money——”

“Did she find it?”

“Ay, she found it. It was hid in a wee box among the thatch o’ the cottage, and she brought it to the dying lad, and he put it into my hand with fingers that were almost clay. And I promised him

all he asked, and prayed wi' him; and he went away smiling like those that die dreaming of heaven."

"I am glad to hear that, father; he has had a sorrowful, painful life."

"Then I looked at the big siller penny, and it was a false crown piece, not worth a bawbee; and when I got home I threw it in the fire."

"Father!"

"Ay, I threw it in the fire, but the next Sabbath I put a true honest crown in the Kirk plate for the little laddie, then in heaven. But I told you nothing at all, for at the particular time you were but a bruised reed, and I did not want to hang your head still lower. And I spoke to his mother also, and bid her let the matter rest between herself and myself, and she said, 'The matter lies between us two, Deacon, I will pass it no further.' Do you now believe that Roy was innocent?"

"Alas, I must believe the very worst! I know well that wee Andrew would not lie, and him at the point of death. But, father, I feel as if there was only an abyss before me. Everything is drifting away, there is no ground to stand on."

"Well, then," cried the Deacon in a kind of ecstasy, "well, then, Annie, there is a sure foundation, and you know what it is. My dear bairn, it

is the ground we do not tread on which supports us:—

“‘The deep below the deep,
And the height beyond the height,
Where our hearing is not hearing,
And our seeing is not sight.’”

This was the beginning of forgetfulness. For after little Andrew's confession, every possible excuse for sentimental sorrow was taken away from Annie, and she gradually got the mastery over herself. And whether we will, or not, time, appointed by God for the consolation of all grief, does obliterate and heal. And as soon as Annie Brodick knowingly and consciously turned her face to “the hills from which cometh our help” she was comforted; comforted in prayer, in sleep, in work, in all her household ways, until her sorrow was nearly a tale of old unhappy far-off things. Then she realized how foolish it had been, and how utterly useless, since all her tears and fond regrets could never make,

“the grass to grow,
On the trampled meadows of long ago.”

Bertha Riley

CHAPTER TEN

THE DEACON MARRIES AGAIN

ABOUT Christmas Mr. Saunders was married, and Annie received wedding cards tied together with white satin ribbons, and her portion of the wedding cake in a little silvered box. She looked at the symbols scornfully, and then put them out of her sight. "I will not ask father a single question, about either bride or groom," she said. "I am caring nothing about them—one way or another. I wonder if Marion was there. If so, she will be sure to tell me all I want to hear."

The Deacon seemed to have come to the same resolution. His face and manner indicated a highly successful visit, but he respected or resented his daughter's apparent indifference, and did not trouble her with any of the details of it. Still he talked to others, and through others Annie learned how the bride was dressed, what company were present, and the immediate intentions of the newly married pair.

"Your father itemized every particular to Leslie Kerr," said Mrs. Lochrigg with laughing contempt.

“Not a bow or a button escaped him. I met Leslie coming from the shop yestreen, and I asked her if she had been to the wedding, and she told me all about it. A friend o’ hers, she said, had been there, and observed it circumstantially. So I questioned her dry, and she answered free as a schoolgirl, adding her own remarks forbye—but they are too silly to pass over to you.”

“Have they gone away? Mr. Saunders was aye talking of a visit to London.”

“Mr. Saunders has just settled down in his own home with his wife. They are a sensible Jack and Jill. He preached his own Kirking sermon from his own pulpit. A sagacious, prudent man. Leslie told me your father stood up with him at the ceremony, and that the young minister depends on his advice; respecting him, and trusting him above all his friends. Weel, a prophet has no honor among his own folk, and nobody in Arran had found out Robert Brodick’s wonderful gifts till Mr. Saunders came.”

“You must not say that, Aunt Lochrigg. Everyone is respecting and relying on father here.”

“To be sure. Your father is perfect humanity—specially among the women folk.”

After this event the Winter wore away not un-

pleasantly, though Annie was sensible that some indefinable change had taken place in her home. The Deacon, though as affectionate as ever, was different. His comings and goings had lost their regularity. She saw him on the street twice with Leslie Kerr, and she knew that he had begun to attend the Kirk's social meetings, and even the "incredible misery" of at least one musical entertainment. On that occasion she had seen him talking to Miss Grizelda Binnie, and Miss Grizelda herself had been one of the performers. She had watched his face during Miss Grizelda's singing of *The Covenanter's Lament*, and been amazed at its emotion, for she gave the credit of this emotion to the singer, though it really belonged to the pathetic melody and mournful words of the ancient lament. It was his soul he heard singing, as if indeed it remembered every note of the music, and every word of the song. And with this strange intuitive knowledge, the exquisite second-sight of memory showed him the Covenanting martyrs praying in the wilderness, and fighting on the battle field for *The Word* they loved dearer than life. No wonder then that his eyes filled with tears, and that he stood up with the men to emphasize their undying veneration for the principles and the martyrs of whom Miss Binnie sang—

The Hands of Compulsion

"There's nae Cov'nant noo, lassie,
There's nae Cov'nant noo,
The holy League and Cov'nant
Is a' broken through.

"There's nae Renwick noo, lassie,
Nor good and great Cargill,
Nor holy Sabbath preaching
Upon the Martyrs' Hill."

Annie had been too intensely absorbed in her personal observations and feelings to understand the enthusiasm of the audience, for men and deeds in the backward centuries. It was her father's love affairs she was considering, and not the men of the Bible and the sword, fighting as they prayed, and praying as they fought.

But she made no untoward remarks. When her father praised Miss Binnie's singing, she conceded its excellence without apparent grudging; but she did not sleep much that night, and early in the morning she went to see Mrs. Lochrigg.

"Aunt," she said, "I want to talk to you."

"Very good. I'll lift my darning and take a few stitches while you do so. Were you at the musical last night?"

"Yes. I did not see you there."

"What for would I be there?"

"What for not?"

"If I could shut my ears, as well as my eyes, I might thole the noise. But I canna."

"Miss Grizelda Binnie sang a song about the Covenanters, and fairly wiled my father's heart away."

"I wouldn't wonder. The Brodicks were all Covenanters, bibles in their belts, swords in their hands. That little lass o' Balmuto's would testify that he was just remembering some of his past lives. I wouldn't daur to say different."

"He was thinking o' this present life. I feel sure he will marry that auld maid, and just for a song. Men are queer."

"Ay, it is a small thing catches them—a song on the lips, a glint o' the eyes, a pawkey smile, a tidy ankle, a bit o' bright ribbon,—or maybe nothing but a few gold pieces. Weel, weel, that's the way it is ordered."

"It may be so, but if my father is going to make a fool of himself in his old age, I must get out of the way of it. I could not bear to see him playing the fond, silly lover to Grizel Binnie; and her sitting in my mother's place. The position is fairly unthinkable, and I will not stay here and see it."

"I'll tell you one thing, Annie, your father will never play the silly lover. Don't you think it. He

will be as discreet and dignified as if he was carrying round the Kirk box for the collection. And no woman can ever take your mother's place. The first wife is never second, or second-rate. The second wife in this case is o' your own summoning."

"There is no need to tell me that. I know it. I want your advice about the future."

"Yes, to be sure. What are you going to do? I was hearing young Carrick—the Duke's private minister—was sick in love with you, and dogging your steps, and sending you hot-house flowers, and making himself pleasant to your father in many ways—shooting and fishing privileges and the like o' them—getting favors from the Duke, ye ken. Losh, lassie! You seem to be a perfect temptation to the ministers."

"Do be quiet, Aunt. You know my heart is with Roy, wherever he may be. It is not of lovers I want to talk."

"Of what, then?"

"Making my living."

"Oh!"—with a decided sniff.

"I have been preparing for this event all Winter."

"I believe you. If there's a prudent lass in Arran, Annie Brodick is her name. Now, then, I would like to know how you have been preparing."

"I have been writing constant to Miss Balmuto, in the first place."

"If you are preparing for another world—they say it's a better world—Marion is as good a director as you'll find, but if you are thinking o' living out your seventy years in this world, I fear she'll lead you among mists and moors and will-o'-the-wisps."

"You are mistaken, Aunt. Marion has a clear, farseeing mind about this world. She gave me good advice, and I am going to take it."

"Then what for are you taking up my time?"

"This way—if you endorse Marion's advice, I shall go forward with double confidence—and if you do not endorse it, I shall go forward with tenfold caution."

"I see. Speak your mind."

"When father marries, I am going to Glasgow. I will not look the second Mrs. Brodick in the face. I do not want to know her name or anything about her. I am going to rent a handsome first floor in some West-End street or Crescent and open it for fashionable dressmaking."

"Preserve us! Annie."

"Miss Balmuto has promised me all her work and influence. I know that I have a good business ready to lift. I know where I can get a first-class fitter,

and an artistic trimmer, and I have both skill and taste myself."

"And the money necessary?"

"I have it. My mother gave me four hundred and twenty pounds not long before she died. It was all her own. Her mother left her two hundred and sixty pounds, quiet-like, and she made it up to four hundred and twenty pounds. She put it into my hands one day, and after her death I put it in the Bank of Scotland, and there it is to-day. It is all my own, mother gave me it."

"Quiet-like?"

"Yes, and I promised her to keep it quiet-like for some emergency. She said every woman ought to have a bit of security in some good bank, for husbands were sometimes untrustworthy securities."

"And you let Roy go to the mischief for the want o' siller? You miserly cutty, why didn't you help him?"

"Four hundred and twenty pounds would have been no help to Roy, and he would have made it a total loss to me. Do you think I would buy a husband? It was Roy's duty to make an income and a home. If he could not do it before we were married, he never would have done it after. Little Roy would have thought of my grandmother's and my

mother's hard savings for fifty years. He would have flung them away in as many days. But even so, I could not give Roy the money—my solemn promise to my dear mother bound me. You would not have trusted Roy yourself with four hundred and twenty pounds."

"You are right. I would not. Go on."

"I have told you my plan. I am ready any day to carry it out, and Marion is ready to help me. I have a list of the ladies who will patronize 'The Brodick Fashion Rooms,' and to be plain with you, Aunt, I wish now that father would marry the woman he wants, and let me go free, and make the money I know I can make. If I need more capital, Marion says she will be glad to invest a few hundred pounds with me."

"She will do nothing o' the kind. When a good chance comes my way, I am not going to let Marion Balmuto fish in my loch. I have five hundred pounds that is not earning its salt—three per cent., and no more—and I will be your partner, if you'll take in a capable, careful woman like myself. The firm will be called '*Lochrigg and Brodick Fashionable Modistes and Drapers.*' We will hang a few rich silks and laces in the front windows to speak for us. Losh, lassie! we will do a quiet, dignified

business that will gie us twenty per cent., maybe fifty per cent., for our money. Are you willing?"

"I am more than willing. I am delighted and very grateful to you."

"Lochrigg and Brodick! Good names both o' them. They'll look fine on a big brass plate on the door. Now tell me about your fitter and trimmer, and whatever other arrangements you have made."

"I will; also, I can show you the list of ladies who have promised to give us their business—they are the cream and honey of Dr. Buchanan's fine Kirk."

In the discussion that followed Annie was cool and calm, and full of business acumen and composure, but Mrs. Lochrigg was quite excited and even speculative. The prospect opened up to the eager, clever woman a new life, with an almost certain assurance of enlarging her interests and profits. She would hardly let Annie go home, and day after day the two women sat hours together, perfecting and enlarging their scheme. And as it grew in magnitude, Mrs. Lochrigg's enthusiasm kept pace with it, so that when the time came for its realization, she was quite ready to make her five hundred pounds a thousand.

Indeed, she began to grow restless about the Deacon

“shilly-shallying among three middle-aged women who all knew their own minds, if he would only find out where to throw the offer o’ himsel’;” and her first inquiry, whenever she saw Annie, was, “What way is the wind blowing now, Annie? Kerr—Binnie—or McLean? Give me patience wi’ such a lover as Robert Brodick! He is as hard to tie to a woman as if this was his first experience.”

But Robert Brodick was not a man to be hurried in such an important matter as the selection of a wife. And after Mr. Saunders’ marriage his attention to the two widows and to Miss Binnie seemed rather to slacken than to increase. Then the Summer brought boarders and larger business, and Annie began to wonder if there was any truth or any serious intention in her father’s courtesy to the women with whom his name had been associated.

“I think he has become frightened, Aunt Sarah,” she said. “Perhaps the Minister is not as happy as he expected to be, and father thinks he had better let well enough alone.”

“And would you give up such an opportunity as we have for a bit o’ prudential selfishness on your father’s part?”

“What else could I do? As long as father depends on me, I cannot leave him alone.”

"Parfect nonsense! I'll not hear tell o' you sitting wi' idle hands here when you could be making money with every finger you have in Glasgow. I'll never forgive you, Annie, if you disappoint me in this matter. Mind that!"

"I would be sorry if I had to do so, Aunt."

The words arrested her attention, and as soon as she was alone she began to ask herself if they were honest words. Would she be sorry to abandon her plan? Would she be glad to retain her father's whole affection, and her place as mistress of his house? Which condition did she really desire? She tried hard to reach the verity that is in the inward part about this matter, shirking no like or dislike, trying every point of it, by an absolute demand for the truth. And she was forced to confess that she would be sorry to relinquish her business scheme, that she would rather work it out to success, than potter about Brodick House looking after the homely duties her position as its mistress demanded.

In fact, she was aware of a certain anxiety because her father and the Widow Kerr seemed less intimate, and because he had not lately spoken of Miss Binnie's fine singing, or Mrs. McLean's generous gifts to the Kirk. Had he withdrawn himself from the danger of matrimony and gone back to his old con-

tentment with life? And were things to remain as they were, as long as he lived, or she was unmarried? She shrank from the prospect, and admitted the shrinking.

As yet, however, Brodick showed few signs of returning to the simple life which had once satisfied him. He still went more frequently to the city than his business required. He wrote many letters, and was always anxious about the post, and Annie remembered well the days in which he hardly ever wrote a letter, unless it was an order for goods. She did not grudge him his correspondence with Mr. Saunders and Professor Balmuto, for the privilege seemed to make him exceedingly happy; what chiefly troubled her was that she had lost her influence over him, and with it, his perfect confidence. He talked little to her, no longer came for her sympathy, no longer explained to her his small perplexities, hopes and plans, hardly ever told her the bits of news or gossip he heard over his counter, and she asked herself sadly, "If Roy's love had ever been worth the price she had paid for it?"

The Summer passed rather wearily. There was no active discomfort, and no real enjoyment. It was hard work sometimes to bring the cheerful morning face to the breakfast room, to make the place bright

and comfortable, and set the table day after day with a dainty nicety no one seemed to notice. That was the sore, the slowly deepening sore, that hurt Annie most of all—her father's indifference to all her efforts to please him. True, she had at one time treated all his efforts to please, or comfort her, with the same indifference; but oh, surely, a father's love should forget, as well as forgive! Brodick, however, evidently feared to put himself near enough to his daughter to be wounded again by her apathy and carelessness.

“He's not like a loving father, but he is very like a prudent Scot,” said Mrs. Lochrigg, “and by what I can make out from a dozen gossips, he has become a monumental similitude o' prudence and politeness to the hale feminine creation. But I have news that may hurry him a bit, for I heard scarce an hour ago that Miss Binnie was married last week at the Bridge of Allan, and I wouldn't wonder if that fact sends your father to the ring and the Minister in double-quick time. He'll want to show the Kirk full, and the town full, that he was never thinking o' Grizelda Binnie—that would be a man's way—and Robert Brodick, though a deacon, is only a man.”

“Grizelda Binnie married! Who to, Aunt?”

“To a curate o’ the Episcopal persuasion, no less, and no mair. Think o’ it! A born and baptized Calvinist, married at the very horns o’ the Episcopal altar! I’m doubting if it is a lawful ceremony.”

“I did not see it in the papers.”

“It was in the papers, sure enough, just like any tailor’s or weaver’s; but it was Jean Fidler that told me. She has a fourth cousin at the Bridge of Allan, and this cousin wrote the particulars to Jean’s mother; and by that way it came to me. She testified to the truth o’ it. I asked if the full Episcopal ceremony was used, and she said ‘no deviation was observed on the occasion.’ Now it is your father’s turn; he is sure to show folk he had no intention o’ making Miss Binnie the second Mrs. Brodick.”

Perhaps Mrs. Lochrigg was right, and perhaps it was only a coincidence, but it was hardly three days after this conversation when an eventful one on the same subject took place. Annie was sitting at the open door sewing and crooning a song, and her father came and stood beside her. She looked up with a smile, and he said—

“Annie, my dear, you be to have a new dress. There is going to be a wedding in the family.”

"Father!"

"Ay, I am going to be married mysel' on the seventeenth o' this month."

"I cannot believe such a thing."

"Why?"

"How am I to bear the like o' that?"

"Of what?"

"A strange woman in the house—mistress, you know—and where will I be? It is cruel. However could you think of such a thing? I am not able to bear it."

"You taught me to think o' it. You, yoursel', Annie, put the thought o' marriage, and the necessity o' marriage, into my mind. You let me see plainly that I must give you up to Roy Morrison, and live my lane, or else have a strange man whom I disliked and distrusted always first at my table and fireside. If it please God, my dear lassie, I may live a quarter o' a century yet, and I want a friend and a companion to live with me. Because you love, must I be without love?"

"I am always your daughter."

"Until you are married. Then you are some man's wife first of all. I am not complaining. I am only looking forward to the years that may come to me."

"And who is to be your friend and companion? Is it Leslie Kerr?"

"I never thought a moment o' Mrs. Kerr. I am not carin' for a frivolous woman."

"Miss Binnie, I hear, is married."

"I know. She has been long engaged. The Episcopal creed stood between her and the man she loved. I finally convinced her there was no sin in marrying out o' her ain Kirk. She has got a good man, ten years older than hersel'."

"Surely you are not thinking to marry Widow McLean?"

Brodick smiled grimly.

"When I am tired o' peace and content and good days I will marry the Widow McLean, Annie. Not until."

"Then who are you going to marry?"

"Mr. Saunders' mother, a pleasant, sensible woman, not many years younger than I am. For every virtue, she is a woman in ten thousand."

"I have no doubt you have chosen wisely, father, and I have nothing to say. You must do your own pleasure."

"She is a good, affectionate woman, and you will be the better of some one to talk to you. I make no question but that we shall all of us be the hap-

pier for her in the house. How much money will you want for a dress, and all things fitting?"

"I want no money, father. If I have lost the first place in your heart and home, I will not take your money. I do not know Mrs. Saunders. I do not wish to know her. I will not go to see her made your wife, and my—step-mother. No, indeed!"

"Are you going to make fresh trouble for me?"

"No."

"We shall be away three weeks. I expect you will have all pleasant and comfortable for our home-coming."

"I will see to it."

"Annie, can't you be pleasanter about the change?"

"No, I cannot."

"Weel, I'm sorry."

That was all.

Ten days after this conversation the Deacon went away with a happy gravity, that would have become a bridegroom twenty years younger, and Annie went dourly about the house, putting this and that into their proper places. She was glad the strain was over, the last ten days had been hard to bear. For she could not but feel that she was outside her father's life, and that it was beyond her power to

take in it the place to which his marriage would relegate her. So she made no propositions, nor expressed any curiosity, and the Deacon concluded she had resolved to accept circumstances beyond her control.

If he had been in a condition to examine himself, he would never have come to such an easy solution of his household problem. He would have known his child's mind by his own mind, and been certain that the acceptance of a lower place in his heart and home was an impossible compliance to her. The cold calm of her face, the poise of certainty in her manner, the absence of all apparent anger, would have certified him that she was ready for some act which would be an adequate restoration of her self-respect and welfare. But a man in love is partially a blind man; he sees only in one direction, and reasons only from one premise, and at this time his daughter was beyond the horizon of the woman he was going to marry.

If Annie did not reason out this condition, she felt it; and having put into order the rooms disarranged by the confusion of packing and dressing, she sat down to consider her circumstances, stripping them of all illusions that might embarrass or deceive her—displaced by a stranger—thrust out from her

father's love—and her life-long home—forced into the world to make her own home and her own living by the cruel hands of a compelling fate—she looked the uttermost results squarely in the face and flinched not. Far from it, for having done so, she rose quickly and resolutely to her feet:—

“I have no time to lose,” she said. “I must be about what I have to do. My duty in this house is almost finished. I will see Aunt Sarah, and be away to-morrow.”

Just as she reached this decision, Sarah Lochrigg called her, and she hurriedly answered the summons in person. “He is gone,” she said, and the words filled her eyes with tears, and gave her a sense of strangling.

“I know, Annie. I met him stepping down the street as if land and water was all his own. He is fairly silly about the woman he is going for. I hope he'll find her half—or a quarter—o' what his fancy paints her.”

“I want to go to Glasgow to-morrow, Aunt, if you will do my last duty for me.”

“I don't know—what is it?”

“He charged me strictly, to have the house made pretty and comfortable for their home-coming in three weeks after the marriage.”

"Three weeks! What for three weeks?"

"They are going to London."

"Preserve us! London! What will he do in London?"

"Just sightseeing."

"And love-making."

"Maybe so."

"I had a few words with him, and he asked me to come and comfort you a bit. He said when your new mother came——"

"Hold there, Sarah. I have one mother, and to me she is not dead. She lives forever."

"Ay, ay, but he meant it kindly. It is to be a big wedding, I hear—her son is to marry them—in his Kirk—after the morning service—think o' that! the whole congregation as witnesses!"

"I can hardly believe it! I thought father was a shy, modest-like man."

"He is in the natural and general way; but men in love are a blend o' the bird called peacock and the beast called lion. We shall see the full account, no doubt, in the *Scotsman*, and the rest o' the irreligious papers."

"I shall not read a word of it. Now, Aunt, take my place here, and put the house in company trim, and let me go and look after our affairs. We must

open the business in September, and there is no time to lose."

"You are right. Go your ways to-morrow, and I'll sort everything here—house and table and neighbors' tongues. And don't carry a care out o' the past into the future. Leave every dark thought behind you."

"That is exactly what I mean to do. It seems father can do without me; well, then, I must learn to do without him."

"And put a brave heart to a steep hill, and you'll find good fortune at the top o' it; no doubt o' that."

"Still, it is hard, Sarah, to feel that it is your father's hands that are pushing you into the world."

"It is a' good for you, Annie. You are o'er narrow; go into the world, and you'll see further in a year than you dream of now."

So the next day Annie left her home forever. Not without sorrowful prayer and bitter tears; not without doubts, and a great sense of wrong; but yet in the swirl and rush of this tide of feeling, holding with a steady hand the vestal fire of conscience, high above the turbulent flood. It was a lovely day, and the old house—that kept like a book the memory of those who had lived in it—seemed at parting moment inexpressibly beautiful and dear. Then some

of Marion Balmuto's teachings came into her memory, and she stood a minute with the open gate in her hand, and whispered to the Spirit of her race and family—"Farewell to your pleasant rooms! I shall come back some day—if not in this life, then in some other."

Marion had been informed of her plans, and she received an affectionate welcome. And that night business was not named, for the conversation drifted naturally to her father's marriage, and the changes it had made. And Annie, as yet un comforted by Sarah Lochrigg's worldlywise counsels, and financial help, laid bare to the kindly Professor all the wounds of her heart. He understood her grief, and saw in it—and made Annie see in it—many compensations.

"My dear," he said, "the log of this fleshly body burns only when there is sacrifice, nothing less will kindle it into flame."

"Sir, I have been compelled to sacrifice everything I love—even my home. For if I had remained there, offences must have come, and my father must have stood with his wife. Do you not see that I would have brought contention and unhappiness into a happy home?"

"I see. I see plainly. And to give up your own right for the happiness of others is a grand sacrifice,

Annie. For you must now find out what care means, and work, and watching, and perhaps injustice and unkindness. And in this sacrifice, your brain and heart, your feet and hands, must take their part; and thus you make of your carnal body an acceptable sacrifice; give all your members, as it were, their passion history; and so imitate the Great Sacrifice, which we adoringly remember and imitate."

"But, sir, I did not freely give up my father, my home, and my life of ease and leisure. Forces I could not disobey really compelled me to resign them, and this resignation was bitterly against my will."

"Annie, in my seventy years of life I have come to the absolute belief that all which happens to a child of God, happens for the best. Whatever has come to me, whatever has been given to me, has proved to be the thing *I needed*, the thing *worth having*. My troubles and entanglements have always come from my own will and way, and my own choosing. I assure you that the Hands of Compulsion are also the Hands of Compassion. They are guiding, guarding, giving Hands. Put your own small, helpless hands into them, and you will be lifted up and strengthened for all you have to do."

And then Marion sent a glance of such heavenly

hope into her friend's face that Annie could no longer fear or doubt. The austere sweetness of sacrifice was fully realized, as she sat alone that night. She understood that any life which progresses must learn the meaning of a crisis—of turning points, which raise material existence above the process of getting hungry and eating, and of getting tired and sleeping;—redeeming events, which set afresh the rudder of conduct, and lift daily life into wider horizons, and loftier experiences.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ANNIE'S NEW LIFE

AT the end of the three weeks nominated, the Deacon and his bride came home. The old place was in all its Autumn glory, and at the open door Mrs. Lochrigg stood, with beaming face and outstretched hand, to welcome them. The Deacon was in his happiest mood, and the little lady at his side looked as if she had been born smiling, and knew not how to do anything else. Sarah read her through in five minutes—"a good-hearted, good-natured wee wife," she thought, "who will get her ain way—and the whole o' it—wi' smiles, or some such like cajolery." It was, however, Mrs. Brodick who first audibly noticed Annie's absence, and asked, "Where is Annie? I was expecting to see the lassie to-day."

"You will be disappointed," answered Sarah; "Annie is in Glasgow."

"What a pity she did not let us know, then we could have come home together."

Sarah did not answer, and the Deacon turned the conversation. He was both anxious and curious,

but he did not permit himself the satisfaction of any inquiry. But when Sarah was ready to go to her own home, he put on his hat, and said he would convoy her, muttering as he did so something about "the dark night, and drunken sailor men."

Mrs. Lochrigg regarded him scornfully. "Man Robert!" she answered, "what for are you bringing in drunk men? You know fine I am feared for no man—drunk or sober. It would have suited you far better to say, I want to know the meaning o' Annie's absence."

"There are other things I want to know, also, Sarah; but your reproof is just, and I deserve it. I'll go and tell Jean I shall be awa' an hour, and then you can inform me what Annie and yoursel' have been up to, as I walk home wi' you."

So he went to Mrs. Brodick, who was in her room changing her dress, and Sarah could not avoid hearing the soft, loverlike tones of his voice, nor the kiss with which their parting was made.

"It's fairly imbecile and scandalous," she muttered; "little kissing went on between him and poor Grace. I'm thankful I didn't marry the man—kissing, indeed! and 'What did you say, darling?' and 'I'll be back anon!' and 'Don't worry yoursel', my dearest.' God Almighty! What fool was it who

said men grew wiser as they grew older? Perfect, ridic'lous nonsense. If there's a woman in the case, an old fool will sail all round a young one"—then stepping briskly forward, she called out lustily:

"Are you coming, Robert Brodick? Your way o' telling Jean is that long and wearisome I'm not able to wait on it. I'll be going."

"Anon, Sarah, anon."

He overtook her at the gate, and she said, sarcastically, "You have learned some new ways o' saying 'I'll be back in an hour.'"

"I have learnt many things lately, Sarah. One of them seems to be that I have an unloving, disobedient daughter."

"Faults are thick, when love is thin, but I am not listening to anything against Annie. She is a good, brave girl. She left a letter for you in your desk. You'll perhaps find time to read it within a month or two."

"Are you angry, Sarah?"

"I'm not pleased, but the circumstances have been turned very favorable."

"Is Annie at Dr. Balmuto's?"

"Annie is in her ain home."

"God help her! Is she married?"

"You might well pray for her—if she was married—but she is not married."

"I had a moment's fear o' Roy."

"Ridic'lous! Annie is o'er like yoursel' to marry anybody but some bit o' perfection."

"You are right there, Sarah. Jean is as nearly perfect as women ever get to be. When you know her you will say the same."

"Not I; I would not risk either my judgment, or my truth-telling on anybody's perfection. Have you forgotten again? Losh! but you can put her out o' your thoughts wi' a word."

"I am loving Annie, dear as ever, but she has behaved badly to me. I told her to get the house in order, and I specified the time we would be home, and I expected her to meet us as a good daughter should."

"I don't pretend to know how good daughters should meet step-mothers. I am sure Annie obeyed her conscience in all things, and as to the house, what was wrong with it? I thought it prettier, and more comfortable, than I had ever before seen it."

"Just so, but I want to know where she got money to buy those two large handsome chairs, and the new carpet, not to speak o' the lace curtains, and other bits o' household finery."

“Weel, Robert, they were my wedding present to you—and Jean. Goodness knows, your old carpet was faded and worn, your old curtains full of bits o’ Annie’s darning, and your ancient chairs were curiosities. And I know well that when women are up in years they like a big soft, easy chair; and you yoursel’ are not behind any elderly woman in that respect. So I just gave you both the wedding gifts most likely to add to your personal satisfaction wi’ life.”

“Thank you, Sarah. I am proud o’ your consideration, and your gifts; but I must tell you that Jean is not what you may call ‘elderly,’ she’s just forty-nine, or thereabouts.”

“Thereabouts is an ample word; it will cover all discrepancies. I see you are not caring to talk about Annie.”

“You know that I am with you now for that very purpose. You said she had her ain home, where did she get it?”

“In one o’ the fine West End crescents—26 Kelvinbrae Terrace.”

“And the money necessary? Did you give her it?”

“When did you know o’ me giving away money? I get value for every penny piece I part with.”

"Well, then, who gave Annie money?"

"Her grandmother Fleming, and her mother Brodick. Her grandmother left over two hundred pounds, and her mother pretty nigh doubled the sum."

"Do you mean to tell me that my wife Grace had four hundred pounds—or thereabouts—hid away beyond my knowledge?"

"Ay, just so. It was first of all given to her with a solemn promise not to speak o' it to any one, but if not needed in her own case for any extremity, to pass it quietly on to Annie, in case some 'extremity' came in her life when it would help her. It came in handy for Annie's extremity."

"There's no plumming a woman's mind, and no finding out their secret ways. I am simply dumfounded. But Jean will be honest wi' me; yes, Jean will be clear and honest. I'm sure o' that."

"Keep your faith in Jean—if you can."

"But whatever made Annie rent a house in Kelvinbrae? Rents are stupendous round that neighborhood. I hope she isn't thinking o' taking lodgers or boarders. Such a like thing would grieve and humiliate Jean, and also Mr. Saunders."

"Neither Annie nor I took the Saunders family into our consideration. Why should we?"

"Because it would have been right and kind."

"We were not thinking o' being kind, we were full o' our ain interests at the time. And I can tell you, a woman can do worse than let her rooms, or cook a good meal for strangers willing to pay for it. However, your indignation is thrown awa' in this respect, for Annie has not a thought o' letting her rooms, or of keeping boarders."

"What then?"

"You must have known, if you ever took notice o' the lassie, that she had a simply wonderful gift wi' her needle. She made all the dresses and cloaks in your house, after she was twelve years old, and I never yet saw the dressmaker who could give the touch, and the air o' distinct grace and gentility, like Annie Brodick could. Marion Balmuto says her fine taste is most extraordinar. And, taste is everything! You can buy skill, but fine taste is a natural-born gift."

"Taste isn't a moral quality. I know nothing about it."

"Yet it is from yoursel' Annie gets her fine taste. Well, you know whether your coats and vests are in good taste, or out o' it, and I never knew any one harder to please wi' his hats than Robert Brodick. Man! I have known you to go to Gillray's three

days running to choose a hat, and come awa' on the third day dissatisfied. Taste! You know fine what good taste is."

"Am I to understand that she is going to make dresses for Marion Balmuto and the like o' her?"

"Ay, you may understand that much, and perhaps a good deal mair. In a couple o' days she will open the finest Fashion Parlor in Glasgow. I wish you could just cast your eyes o'er her sale and reception room, wi' its handsome furnishings and long mirrors, and the rich silks and velvets, and satins and lace, gloves and silk stockings to match—and——"

"Hold a minute, Sarah, you are dreaming."

"I am as wide awake as you are."

"Silks, satins, velvets, laces, these things cost gold."

"To be sure—but for a while she will sell them on commission. In a year or less she will sell her ain goods, and have the full profit on them."

"On commision? but she would have to give big security."

"Ay, Dr. Balmuto and Sarah Lochrigg managed that part o' the business."

"If Annie fails, it will hurt my reputation every way."

"Annie will not fail. Do you think I would have

put a thousand pounds into a failure? I hope you have a better opinion of Sarah Lochrigg than that."

"A thousand pounds!"

"Ay, I am in the firm, as it were, and I know what I am doing. Failure is out o' our line. I'm going to get twenty per cent. on this investment—perhaps more. And my presence will give a kind o' respectability and assurance."

"Your appearance is not in the fashion, I should say."

"Don't fash yourself about my appearance. When I am in Glasgow, I shall be dressed up to the nines—silk and velvet material, fine taste, tip-top style, for now and then I'll be standing in place o' Annie. It isn't likely I am going to let a woman so bonnie, and so young, go down to the wholesale houses, where the men are old, and not to be trusted; but they will try no cantrips wi' Sarah Lochrigg."

"Weel, Sarah, you have taken my breath from me. I feel as if I could never wonder again at anything. How long have you and Annie been plotting and planning against me?"

"Since you began plotting and planning for another wife. We had plenty of time, for you were as hard to suit with a wife as you are with a hat.

That day you went for your wife, Annie told me that Marion Balmuto had secured patrons, and a proper house for her, and she was ready to begin and work for her living. I liked her patience, and her prudent ways, and as I had a little money nearly idle, and wanted the stir o' the city now and then, I offered mysel' as her partner, and she had the sense to take the offer gladly, and we shall neither of us regret it."

"You would not help Roy."

"I would not throw money away."

"Where is Roy?"

"God knows. Will traced him to London—then lost sight and sound o' the poor lad."

"Where is Will?"

"Still on the Mediterranean liner. He is to be promoted soon. Will is all right, and doing middling well. Now, then, the first time you visit Glasgow, go and see Annie."

"I will not. It is Annie's place to come and see me, and her stepmother."

"She cannot come to you—she will be needed in her place constant, and she says she will never see her stepmother."

"She is a dour, stiff-necked, disobedient child. But she'll come to me. I'll never go to her."

"Never is not for mortal man, or woman, to say."

"When are you going to Glasgow?"

"If all is well, I'm going on Monday. Here we are at my house door. Go back to your Jean, and ask her. I think she will bid you call on Annie at once."

"I am sure she will leave the question to my own sense o' right."

"Then she'll be a queer kind o' woman. Just think o' the convenience Annie might be to her, in the way o' handsome gowns. *Tut-tut!* no woman would let such an opportunity go by her, for the sake o' a few kind words. Jean will make you see that it is your duty to call on your daughter."

"Jean has nothing of such a selfish, scheming nature. Jean will pay full price for all she wears. I'll see to that."

"You're in the glorified atmosphere o' a newly married man, Robert. You think you can do everything with your wife, and your wife will finally do everything with you. Good-night, Robert."

"You are a provoking creature, Sarah."

"Ay, it is a provoking world. Haste you home—or—or——"

"I'm no feared, Sarah. Jean is a sensible woman. Good-night."

And as "all was well" on the following Monday, and the weather exceptionally fine, Sarah carried out her purpose of going to Glasgow. She was in a pleasant mood of self-congratulation, for she was reflecting, as she travelled to the city, how few women at her age would have the strength of character to enter upon a new life with radically different interests and sources of profit. She felt that she was leaping beyond her own shadow; and daring the larger horizon of a city woman, and a woman of business with city women. And the thought was exhilarating to her.

She found Annie dressing the windows of her show room, and was delighted with her taste and judgment. Annie also was happy and sanguine, and as she went about putting laces and gloves and ribbons into their proper receptacle, she chatted pleasantly of their bright prospects, and the orders and promises already received. But she did not name her father, or her home, and her reticence in this respect soon became oppressive to Sarah, and she said sharply: "Why are you not asking about your ain folk?"

"I knew you would tell me all worth telling, when you felt like it."

"Weel, then, I'll tell you now, and be by with it.

As to your father and his new wife, they came home cooing like a pair o' turtle doves, and they were pleased with the house, and what had been done to it."

"Did father ask for me?"

"Your stepmother did. I said you had made your home in Glasgow, and the subject went by for the hour. But as your father convoyed me hame, I told him everything, and for the life o' me, I cannot yet decide what he thought, or what he felt. Only, he said plainly he would not come to see you until you had been to see your new mother."

"Do not call her my 'new mother' again, Sarah. I am not liking it."

"And pray how will you alter the fact? You be to accept it, whether you like it or not. Things have sorted themselves about as your father wanted them—even better. He had set his heart on having the Rev. Mr. Saunders for a son-in-law, and he has got him for a stepson; and hearing and seeing himself called 'Father' constant by the popular young man."

"I cannot believe that."

"Weel, I'll swear to it. There were letters waiting him and bride when they won home, and your father read his aloud; it began, 'My dear and much-

respected Father.' And pretty soon she read aloud from her letter this message from the stepson—' Tell father I will send the papers regularly, and also the new Hymns and Paraphrases as soon as they are out of the printers' hands.' Now, then, what are you going to do, or say, to offset such flattering words? His 'dear respected father' was mightily pleased with them. I can tell you that much."

"I shall neither do nor say anything. Father knows me. He knows I love and respect him. He cannot forget me."

"I would not build on that faith—very high. The second Mrs. Brodick is as bonnie a woman as you could meet in a day's walk."

"Then she *is* pretty?"

"Ay, very much so, for her years. She has brown hair wi' the wave o' a curl in it, and soft brown eyes, and a trig figure, and a little foot, and a light step; forbye a smile, and a voice that could win her way straight through any man's heart. I don't love the woman, but it would be gey easy to love her; for I'm sure she is straightforward and good-hearted. Your father has had his usual luck, and got much more than he had any right to expect."

"Did they go to the Kirk together?"

"Ay, they did that."

"Father always left mother and myself to follow him."

"He will doubtless fall into the lonesome way before long, but it was a pleasant sight to watch them come linking up to the Kirk door. She was bonnily dressed, and the Kirk was as full as if it was a sacramental occasion, or a missionary service wi' real missionaries on the platform."

"What did she wear?"

"A puce-colored satin gown, and a little white lace bonnet, and if you can believe it—a—white—lace—shawl."

"Sarah!"

"And white kids on her hands. It's simple truth I'm telling you. Your father carried his white gloves, and I wish you could have seen Elder Ruthven's face. He showed a perfect contempt for the Deacon."

"There was no necessity for any one's contempt. Father did the right thing. Contempt is not for Deacon Brodick. Let us drop the subject. We have our own affairs to discuss."

They soon found these more than sufficient. Marion Balmuto, in a fine equipage, called early, and she was followed by a constant stream of visitors.

The next day, and many days afterwards, were equally busy; and it became necessary for Sarah—handsomely gowned—to take her place at the desk. She filled it to perfection. “I have simply stepped into my proper work,” she said, and she did not go back to Arran for a month. The business was then on a good foundation, and Sarah was suffering to report her experiences to Robert Brodick—and many others.

It does not take a sensible life long to accommodate itself to new surroundings. Annie was not unhappy. She had a moderated passion for money-making, and she liked to invent and bring to beautiful perfection garments ideally lovely and graceful. Invitations of all kinds were soon extended to her, but she wisely stood on her business position, and accepted hospitalities from no one but the Balumtos. But Marion had need of friendship at this time, for she was to marry Mr. Crieff at the New Year, and it was only with Annie she cared to discuss the great change she was approaching. The first information given in these confidences was a little astonishing. “When you meet James, Annie, you will now have to call him Lord Crieff.”

“Is he really a lord?”

“A great lord, and like to be greater.”

"Why did he not take his title when we first knew him?"

"That troubled me, Annie. I felt as if I had been deceived, and I wished to break our engagement, but grandfather said he had done well and right. Still, I wish that I had been told all the truth, when he first asked me to marry."

"When did he tell you?"

"Last Winter his elder brother had an accident and became paralyzed. He was slowly dying, and the Earl of Crieff entreated James to come home. So he gave up everything and went north. The family needed him much, for Lord Hector was helpless, and the earl himself a sick man. The estate also was suffering for want of proper supervision, and James saw that his duty lay with his own family. He was grieved to resign his mission work, but he knew that the duties God had set were more binding on him than those he had chosen for himself. I did not see him again until his brother was dead."

"And he was then heir to the earldom?"

"Yes."

"So you will some day become Countess Crieff?"

"If I live."

"I am sorry he won your love in a false position."

"So am I, and at first I could see nothing but the

deception, but grandfather says he did right not to go down to the poor as a lord."

"He ought at least to have told your grandfather when he asked his permission to woo you?"

"He did tell grandfather, and it seems that grandfather had long suspected his identity. I was angry at being kept in the dark, for I believed James had been silent because he wished to be sure that I loved him for himself. As if I cared for any earthly title! I, that would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the palaces of kings."

"What did you say to him when he did speak of his real rank?"

"I took our engagement ring from my finger and gave it back to him. There was trouble in the house for a week, and then I accepted the noble, in place of the preacher. It is my destiny—the road laid out for me—the very road that will lead me home."

"But you wish to marry Lord Crieff?"

"If I must marry—yes. I had hoped that joyful and sorrowful experience was finished. It seems not quite."

Annie looked up doubtfully, curiously, not sure what to say, and Marion added, "If you have read understandingly the Sacred Word, you must remember the positive promise of the Lord Jesus Christ—

‘The children of this world marry and are given in marriage, but they that shall be counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the Angels, and are the children of God.’ (Luke Chap. 20. v. 34-36.) You see, Annie, when we are worthy to escape marriage, we shall be as the Angels, we shall not be reincarnated again, we shall die no more, we shall be children of God, and remain in our Father’s house forever.”

“But God appointed marriage, Marion.”

“It is a grand spiritual school, the best of all schools. I have to go there again; there is some lesson for me to learn that can only be learned in it. The angel of my life knows best. I take the road laid out—it will prove the nearest way home.”

“And you are glad to take it with Lord Crieff?”

“Yes, very glad. He understands me.”

“As we are talking of your marriage, let me show you an exquisite piece of white satin fit for a marriage gown, and some lace that is a miracle of beauty. Where do you go for your honeymoon?”

“We go straight to Crieff Castle. There is work for me to do there, comfort to speak, help to give, something to accomplish, or to suffer, before I go

hence. So much I know, the rest will be shown to me. It is all well."

Such conversations were frequent, and Annie glided over them as easily as possible. She gave to Marion a warm and perfect gratitude, but the feeling could hardly be called friendship. The women were too radically different, and, besides, true friendship has no acquaintance with gratitude. Still they were never many days apart, and Annie learned to love without understanding, very much as a child loves without asking itself 'why?'

And Annie's life was soon a busy one. Every week saw fresh additions to the number of her work-women, and before November a professional book-keeper had been installed in Sarah's place. For during the Winter months Sarah came less frequently to Glasgow, but she stayed longer when she did come, and these visits were alway times of refreshment to Annie. They renewed her in every direction, and kept fresh and firm that sacred bond which tied her to the kindred she had apparently denied.

For Sarah was an absolutely truthful woman. She did not love the second Mrs. Brodick, but she scorned not to give her the praise due her. Frankly enough, she mocked at the Deacon's idolatry of his Jean, but with equal frankness admitted the woman

deserved it. "She's the sweetest-tempered creature in the world," she said one day, "and if it is ever lawful to be a stepmother, she could show her credentials for the almost impossible office. Every one praises her, Annie, that's a fact."

"And every one blames me, I suppose, for running away from such a paragon."

"Ay, they do. Some people say things you would not like, but I always tell them to 'mind their own business until they grow sense enough to attend to other people's.' You are owing none of them anything in the way o' a back word. I have lifted them all, and they are paid in full. You see, Annie, I wear one o' my silk gowns very constant now, and a silk gown on a weekday downs and dumbs them a bit. They will take from a woman in silk what they would fling back like stones to a woman in a linsey petticoat—that's human nature—a snobbish, cowardly nature it is."

"Not always."

"Weel, in the general. I'm not including our ain families, of course. Dear knows, it's a good thing for Arran that the salt o' some o' its families hasn't lost its savor. The sins o' the Brodicks and Lochriggs have been among themselves, and none o' them bad enough to make meeting at the Resurrection

painful beyond measure. At the New Year, I hope you'll go home and make up wi' Mrs. Brodick. I have a notion it may be easier done *here* than *yonder*."

And Annie, smiling, shook her head, and taking Sarah's arm answered—"Come, let us have some dinner. There is a fine black cock roasted before the fire, and a pudding, and the best cup of tea in Glasgow."

Bertha Riley

CHAPTER TWELVE

MARION FINDS THE WAY HOME

IN orderly monotony the busy days passed into weeks, and the weeks into months, and nothing until near the New Year disturbed the even tenor of their duties and pleasures. But between Christmastide and the New Year, Marion was quietly married to Lord Crieff, and went with him to the gloomy old castle on the shore of the stormy North Sea. Annie dressed her, both for her wedding and her wedding journey, and she was astonished at the silence and restraint that marked her behavior. If the contrary had not been certain, Annie would have feared she was either an unwilling or an unhappy bride. For as she clasped her mantle, its black fur trimmings so accentuated the pallor, and even anxiety of the childish face, Annie could not help asking: "Do you fear to go, darling? It is so cold and dreary now in the Highlands, why not stay South until Spring?"

"I cannot, Annie. No doubt the road will be cold and difficult, and the castle lonely and full of the shadow of death; but it is *on the way*, dear, *on the*

way home. If I turn aside from it now, I may never find it again. I dare not think of that. I know that I am right;" and a smile like sunshine transfigured her face, and she lifted up her head and began to talk cheerfully, unconscious of the tears that were brimming her eyes, until one fell upon the glove Annie was buttoning. She brushed it away with a laughing reminder that "tears were not for wedding days;" then commending her grandfather to Annie's friendship, she kissed her, and went rapidly to the waiting coach.

"That is over," sighed Annie, as she watched the vehicle disappear. "Once in school, once in Arran, here in Glasgow, some fate has thrown us together. Aunt Sarah would say the third time was final. Perhaps it is. I think we have done for each other all appointed us."

But she was haunted for many days by the memory of the white childish face, so fearful and yet so brave, nor quite satisfied when she received a letter from Castle Crieff telling her that "everything was much better than she had expected." Still in Annie's busy life the incident gradually lost its importance, until there remained only a fugitive memory, binding her to show some friendship towards the lonely old man committed to her kindness.

One evening, after an exhausting day's work, she put on her hat and cloak and went to see the Professor. She was physically weary, and a little downhearted, for she was beginning to find out that money-making was not always happiness-making. She had had some business disappointments, and Sarah had not been well, and her visits had been delayed or omitted, and it takes but a trifle in such moods to make the heart fearful and unhappy. She had also a great longing to see her father, and as she rapidly trod the gas-lit, crowded streets, she felt that any one from her native place who could talk to her of the people she knew, and loved, would be dearly welcome.

Full of this feeling, she entered Professor Balmuto's parlor, and found Will Morrison sitting with him. She was delighted. She took both Will's hands in hers, and sitting down at his side opened a conversation which was like wine to her heart. For an hour she was her happiest self, and the Professor looked and listened with some astonishment. It was an Annie Brodick he had never before seen.

When Annie rose to go Will rose with her. "I will see you safe home, Annie, if you will give me that pleasure," he said, and Annie smiled, and laid her hand in his. The streets were damp and dirty,

there was not a star in the lift, the lights were dim in the fog, and the air was full of discordant sounds, but Will had an interior light and joy that made him oblivious of all exterior discomforts. He led her the longest way home, and Annie made no dissenting remark, for Will surrounded her with the aura of Home and home-love, and it was that cherishing, nourishing influence she hungered for.

After a little hesitation, Will finally told her that he had had a letter from Roy, and was intending to take a midnight train to Liverpool in order to see him. "I believe he is going abroad," he said, "though he does not name any place in particular. Aunt Sarah thought I had better see him. What do you think, Annie?"

"I think Aunt Sarah is likely to be right."

"Then I shall go. Have you any message for Roy?"

"No. He left me without either spoken or written word. Do not remind him of Annie Brodick."

"A good wish could do no harm."

"If you think so, give him one. I wish well to all."

"Nothing more? Not one hope, Annie?"

"Not one. It would be an untruth, and could do him no good. I pray God to help him to bring forth

the best in him, for I do believe, Will, that beneath the frivolous, deceitful, outside man, there is an underlying personality of sweetness and nobility. At times I got a glimpse of it, but I had not the power over Roy to bring it to the front, and set it above the lower man. Marion could explain what I mean. I stumble, for I do not see clearly."

"I know. There is a good side to Roy. I have seen it."

But Will noticed that she did not ask him to call on his return from Liverpool. Indeed she seemed to resolutely put her old lover out of the conversation, which turned during the rest of their walk upon Will's next voyage to Smyrna, and upon Aunt Sarah's remarkable rejuvenation. At Annie's house door they stood a few minutes, and she said, "Be sure to call and see me when you come back from the Mediterranean, Will. I want to hear about all the wonderfals that have happened to you."

"I will not forget, you may be sure of that, Annie."

"Good-bye, Will! You have done me good, more good than you can imagine." And Will clasped her hands in his and said, "God bless you, Annie," and so turned away; for his love had that nobility which scorns success, unless won with stainless honor. In

Liverpool he would speak plainly to Roy, and if Roy had given up all hope of winning Annie for his wife, he could then press his own suit with a clear conscience.

If Annie thought further that night of the brothers, it was of Will mainly. "Roy wants money," she decided, "and doubtless poor Will is expected to supply it." The subject, however, was old and worn out, she put it fretfully aside, and really was more anxious to see Sarah than either of her nephews. She missed her cheerful hopefulness, and the mental tonic of her clear-sighted truth-telling about all events.

One snowy afternoon four days afterwards, Sarah came into the showroom with a little blustering defiance of the weather. "I have won here in spite o' the storm," she said. "I have been waiting for a fine day, till I was enough out o' temper to take the very worst day o' the Winter, and I just told Nature to mind her own affairs, and I would mind mine in spite o' her. So here I am, Annie. And how's all wi' you?"

"All right, Aunt." Then they went into the parlor, and Annie ordered tea, and removed Sarah's wet wraps, and both women chattered the while of the things they had been keeping for mutual discussion.

And whether Annie's apparent forgetfulness of both Roy and Will was real or feigned, even the sharp-eyed Sarah could not determine. But whenever her observation failed, Sarah quickly came to catechism, and so turning sharply to Annie, she asked:—

“Did you see Will last week?”

“Yes, I met him at Professor Balmuto's.”

“Did he tell you he was going to Liverpool to see Roy?”

“He told me. Did he see his brother?”

“Ay, he saw both Roy and Roy's wife.”

“Roy's wife?”

“That is what I say, and it is the very truth, Annie Brodick. He has married a singing girl, a dancing girl out o' some o' the deil's playhouses—and mair, he is perfectly delighted wi' himsel' for the doing o' the deed.”

“Are you believing the like o' that, Aunt?”

“Will saw the lassie—had speech wi' her—and heard her sing. He says she is bonnie beyond comparing, and sings like a lark on the wing. Will was fairly bewitched by her, he hadn't words big enough to praise her.”

“Did Will Morrison go to a playhouse to hear her sing?”

“Now then, what are you talking about? Would

you get Will Morrison inside o' a playhouse? She sang for Will in their ain room. They are going to New York, where Roy is sure she will make a fortune."

"And in the meantime—what?"

"Roy borrowed fifty pounds from Will. Mrs. Roy Morrison had also a few pounds saved, and they were as happy as two bairns going on a picnic."

"And Will thought her pretty?"

"Will said she was a great beauty. She gave Will pictures o' herself from the papers, and made him read some o' the fine words about her singing and dancing. Roy is fairly transported with his good fortune, for he says all London town was at her feet."

"Such ridiculous nonsense! The town o' London has something else to do, than fling itself at any woman's feet. That is one of Roy's evendown lies. Did Will tell you what the creature was like?"

"Ay, Will said she was like a rose. He said songs came bubbling into her throat, and rippled in music from her lips. He said she was all frills and ribbons, and lace and smiles—dressed marvelous in pink and white—and jewels round her neck, and arms and fingers."

"And toes, too, I suppose? No, I believe it was 'bells on her toes' the lady going to Bambury Cross on her cock-horse wore."

"That will do, Annie Brodick. I wouldn't be spiteful and envious—it is far from like you."

"Oh, I am not caring, Aunt. I just wonder at Will being so easily taken captive. The circumstance is what we might expect from Roy—but Will——" and she shrugged her shoulders to express her contemptuous astonishment, not being able to find words strong enough.

"Ay, Will kind of staggered me. She had him under her witchery. He actually said he thought she would manage Roy better than any other kind o' woman. God knows good women like myself and Annie Brodick have totally failed wi' the lad."

"What did you say to Will?"

"Not much, for Will would hear nothing against either o' them. He said he saw no harm in the bonnie wee wife, and a good deal o' everything loving and lovable—and the like o' that."

"Sarah!"

"More kinds of good women than one. He said that also, and he had no doubt his pretty sister-in-law would be the saving o' Roy—and so forth. For it seems Roy is in a burning fever o' love for her,

and Will thinks him a fairly changed man in her hands."

"He never loved me, Aunt. I knew that as soon as I saw Lord Crieff's love for Marion Balmuto. He thought me a good speculation, and I disappointed him. When he gave me up, it was without a good-bye or a good wish."

"I'll tell you something, Annie, you perhaps never thought of. Roy got to be superstitious about you—he told Will he hated to speak your name, for you never brought him anything but trouble."

"He brought all his troubles on himself, and he brought me only shame and sorrow."

"You are well off without him."

"Ay, but he made a loss in my life. I put better men away for him, and I made myself ill, and my dear father miserable, and wasted two years of the Springtime of my youth worrying anent him and his false love. I am wishing him no ill with his singing girl, indeed I am sorry for the poor lassie, for she is over good for the like of him. He will grow superstitious about her—if she does not make money enough to suit him."

"I thought it best to tell you all the truth. Will said he could not do it."

"You have done right, Aunt. Truth stands all

tests. Now, Sarah, this is the last of Roy Morrison as far as Annie Brodick is concerned. Never name him to me again. And I am not caring to hear much more about Will. His pretty sister-in-law will suit him better than I shall. I want to forget both of them, so forget to speak of them in the future. Promise me to do this."

"I'll promise—conditionally. I could not say I would never speak o' them unless I knew the future."

"How is my father these days?"

"Growing younger every hour. His second wife is much thought of by everybody. I mysel' am getting on with her very well, and she took a great fancy to Will."

"Who is Will?"

"*Losh!* Annie, don't make a fool o' yoursel'. You ken fine who Will is—and I'll not stop talking o' Will to please you. If you would do your duty, and be a happy woman, you would come to Arran and stay with me for a day or two. Then Mrs. Brodick would hurry herself to call and see you, and you have only to meet, and be friends. You cannot keep an ill-feeling towards her, I know, for I tried hard, and I could not manage it."

"If Mrs. Brodick wants to see me, she can call

here. She has as much invitation as any one. She is in Glasgow, I suppose, at the present time."

"I don't think so. She was in our Kirk last Sunday."

"I heard Mrs. Laird telling Mrs. Gowrie this morning that their minister—Mr. Saunders, you know—had a son born to him last night. I'll warrant Mrs. Brodick was there to welcome the child."

"Why not? And now your father will have a grandson. My certie! but he'll be the proud auld man. Doubtless it will be called 'Robert' after him."

"Why? The child has a real grandfather of his own blood and kin."

"He is a worldly, sinful creature, not fit to grandfather such a child o' grace as the Minister's first bairn will be. Your father will have the grandfather's duty to do, and I'm sure your stepmother will be daft over her part o' it. You will only be a kind o' aunt, but you will be called upon for coral beads, and embroidered robes, and such like necessities—forbye, the baptizing fineries and gifts."

"I shall not ware a bawbee on the child."

"Your family, Annie——"

"My family increases too fast."

"You are a dour lassie. Give way a bit, Annie."

“Not an inch, Sarah. I have no one in all the world but you. No one else cares for me, and I care for no one else. You are all I have, you are all I want—except father—and he goes further and further away. He will be beyond my knowledge soon, but he is happy, thank God for that!”

This conjunction of circumstances impressed Annie profoundly. Except for one old woman, she stood alone in the world. Roy had deserted her and married another woman. Will's behavior she persisted in misunderstanding. He had sided with Roy and Roy's wife, and given them love and money though they had treated her so badly. Yes, she felt Will's disaffection far more bitterly than Roy's infidelities. Roy had behaved to her with brutal indifference, and scornful neglect, and Will had never for a moment made Roy feel that he was angry with him for it.

Sarah spoke of the brotherly tie, and of their probable life-long parting, and then—most unadvisably—of Will's delight in finding that he might now woo her, without wounding his brother's feelings. This latter suggestion enraged Annie. She wanted to know what Roy Morrison's feelings had to do with her? She said she would utterly scorn a lover who asked Roy Morrison if he had done

with her—for that, in plain Scotch, was what Will meant. So he had been waiting, till Roy gave him permission to speak to her, had he? Let him know then, now and forever, she would never give herself permission to listen. *Waiting till Roy signified that he had done with her!* Over and over she made this provoking assertion, until it had thoroughly poisoned her heart and mind with its venomous ideas.

And Sarah found all her philosophy and all her homely sarcasms blunted weapons against Annie's sense of insult and desertion. She would listen to no excuses, but surrounded herself with an atmosphere of proud isolation, and gave all her energies to money-making. And if financial success can atone for love's failure, Annie ought to have been satisfied; for it was not only in her legitimate business she prospered, she developed a talent for speculation, which fairly frightened the more prudent Sarah. In this respect, Annie's most pronounced natural instinct adopted its opposite, and with a kind of reckless confidence, forced it to astounding results. And Sarah trembled at the risks Annie took, and then trembled anew at their wonderful success.

"It isn't canny, Annie," she said almost in a whisper. "I'm feared, I'm feared, my lass, that we are

out of the way o' righteousness. Such profits might be called usury, and there is something said in the Word anent usury. I don't just remember it, for I was paying no attention to a sin I thought clear beyond my power to commit." And Annie only smiled; she knew large profits could make their own justification, if any was needed.

So time went on, and at the end of the third year Annie owned the house she had almost been afraid to rent, and had, besides, far more "lying siller" in Glasgow banks than any one suspected. She declared she was satisfied with her life. "It gave her," she said, "far more pleasure than love had done. Love had brought her nothing but fear and worry, and slight and shame, and quarreling and disappointment. But her Bank Book! It was all in golden figures, and it never lied to her, never deceived her, never broke its promises. A friend like that was better than a lover. Yes, indeed!"

Testing things by such material results, Annie felt that she had turned love's failure into a golden success. But whether this satisfaction would be able to bear the proof and trial of loftier standards of conduct, was not yet within her experience—scarcely within her consideration. The criterion came to her one hot evening in early August. She was sitting

alone at the open window, vaguely watching the weary crowd of workers trailing homeward. The doorbell startled her. It was an imperative ring—a ring that had the vitality of a human call in it, and she went to meet the girl hurrying upstairs with a telegram:—

“Annie, come to me. I am nearly home. Marion.”

She was shocked. She had forgotten Marion. She thought her duty in that direction was finished, and the call was not welcome. But being August, she had no valid excuse for not going to Crieff; her business was closed until September, and she had just been planning for a visit to the Bridge of Allan. The ancient castle and the dying woman did not allure her. However, the message had come with an authority beyond any every-day design and she felt that she must obey it, willingly or not. Her conscience in this respect was still sensitive as a nerve, and she had no rest until she began to make preparations for the journey; so that on the evening of the second day, the earl met her at the nearest landing place, and she saw at once upon his face the shadow of that sorrow that was only waiting.

“Marion?” she asked as they met with clasping hands.

“She is drifting away to a still, strange land.”

"It is the land she has always been seeking."

"Yes," he answered, "the vision of the divine home from which her soul wandered, haunted her continually. I am glad you have come, for Marion cannot remain long in the borderland. Christ himself will speak the 'Enter thou' unto her."

"Here, she could not be satisfied."

"She was on her way to God, and could rest nothing short of that."

As they approached the Castle, Annie saw with a pang of pain the last earthly home of the sweet spirit hungering for "one not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It stood among black precipitous crags, on the summit of a high hill overhanging the North Sea, and had an awful *past* look, though in some ways it had been modernized. Thus the ancient courtyard, which had been the martial gathering place of the clan, was now a lovely garden; the long stone stairs leading to the sleeping rooms were covered down the center with a strip of handsome crimson carpet, and the small windows had been replaced by wide, ample ones in all the dwelling rooms.

It was on a bed drawn to an open casement that Annie found Marion. She was like a phantom, the loveliest ghost of a human creature that the most

heavenly imagination could dream of. Her small listening face was innocent and fearless as that of a child; her eloquent eyes—open to some glorious vision—were unconscious of earthly presence; her hands lay clasped on the white cover as if in adoration. The transfiguration of divine love conquering death was over her—she was speaking in low, sweet tones of heaven, and heavenly experiences; and

“had the look of one
To whom glad news is sent
From the far country of her home,
After long banishment.”

In this borderland of being, where life scarcely drew breath, she remained until the night fell, and the full moon rose gloriously over land and sea, and flooded the silent room. Then she slowly became conscious, and Crieff, bending tenderly over her, whispered, “My darling, Annie is here;” and she answered in a glad voice, “Come to me, Annie;” and Annie knelt down at her side, and she was softly weeping, but she could not speak. For oh, that two hours’ silent watching and waiting in the twilight and moonlight had been a wondrous voice to Annie Brodick. Before that pure soul, with its heavenly eyes, and heavenly hopes, she was ashamed and sorrowful. She did not feel worthy to touch the sen-

sitive lips, hallowed by life-long prayer, or to clasp the hands that had already let fall every earthly thing. Old memories sprang up to strangle her, but at length she found power to say, "Marion! Marion! Why did you not send for me before? My dear, my dear, I had forgotten, I had forgotten."

"I hear that you have been what people call fortunate, Annie, but oh, what will it profit if you gain all the world, and lose your soul? What will it profit, Annie?"

"Nothing! Nothing, Marion!"

"Christ's dear love is the only good there is—and if you but once drink deep of that divinest anguish, you never could desire the empty world again. At this hour, Annie——"

"Yes, dear?"

"Christ is everything. He feeds me with the bread of life, and covers me with the banner of His love. He gives me a joy past utterance, a rest unspeakable. Remember, Annie! You must come where I am going. I shall watch for you—do not disappoint me."

"Oh, Marion, if death——"

"Death!" she said with a celestial smile—"that deceitful word! This is the great saying that men forget—*death is life.*"

She moved her hand a little, and Crieff clasped it, and the shadows of night grew darker, and there was not a sound but the murmur of the ocean on the pebbly beach below them. But some tender *Presence* made a sweetness in the room, and the air was thrilled with shadowy sounds, and the softest stir—as of unseen wings. About midnight she said in a voice sweet and hollow—like muffled music a long, long way off—“Now, my dear Lord Christ, take me Home; into Thy Hands—into Thy Hands I commit——”

But whether she went away with that prayer or not, none knew. A little later Crieff rose from his knees and whispering “She has gone,” left the room, and Annie was alone with the dead.

Then she called in Marion’s maid, and dressed the dead for her burial, as she had dressed her for her bridal, and her heart overflowed, and she could not forgive herself for the neglect she had shown the sweet soul, that she might perhaps have helped and comforted in her last painful days. *Too late! Forever too late!*

She only remained long enough to see the dear little body laid, with a triumphant hymn, in the windy sepulcher of the lords of Crieff. She could do nothing more, except weep for the opportunities

love would have given her, but which were now lost to her forever. The earl seemed inconsolable, and she had no comfort to offer; for every heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with it. Yet, just as she was leaving him, he put into Annie's hand a few lines, which doubtless struck the first notes of comfort for him—

“Yet there are lives that 'mid the trampling throng,
With their prime beauty bloom at evensong.
Hearts, for whom God has judged it best to know—
Only by heresy—sin, and want, and woe;
Bright to come hither, and to travel hence
Bright as they came, and wise in innocence.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE EARL AND ANNIE BRODICK

THE emotions and experiences of this sad week did not fade from Annie's memory or feelings; they bit deeper and deeper into her consciousness. She would have chosen to forget them, but she could not, for they were foreign to her life, and she was only half persuaded of their general usefulness. "Marion was so impractical," she thought; "the world could not go on if people lived up to her standard."

She hoped when she reached Glasgow to be able to throw off the unnatural atmosphere in which she had been suffused during the startling episode of Marion's translation. But the city—great as it was—noisy with speech and traffic—swarming with existences steeped in every material product—did not banish the unearthly senses that had been stimulated during her visit to Castle Crieff. Blatantly present as the streets were, she could neither see nor feel them, for the great mountains shouldering each other up to heaven, the peaceful corries, hazy with bluebells, nestling in their strength, the mighty ocean stretching away to the occult shores of the

poles, were the backgrounds of her thoughts, even in the hot, dusty cab which carried her to her own house. Surely she would feel at home with herself there.

No! She entered it like a prisoner going back to his cell; its gloom, its air of emptiness and neglect, the black-eyed, black-browed woman coming from the depths of the cellar kitchen to say a not very pleasant "Home already!" only accentuated the large air of freedom, and of the presence of God, she had left among the mountains, and on the surging, singing waters of loch and sea. There also she had seen again the fishing boats, and the men who face life and death in them—men silent and grave, in big sea boots and guernseys, with the salt in their hair, and the breath of the ocean all round them, and the sounds of the waves in their voices. The men she saw in Glasgow were different, silk-hatted, fine-tweed, well-laundered men, who were deaf to all the voices calling her from high places, and far-reaching waters.

The next day she wandered aimlessly about her home, trying to find herself, to recall herself to the life she must live. "For I am not all here," she whispered. Nor was she. Her personality, in its finest essences, had escaped her control; she had left

it on the hills, and on the ocean, and in the old room in Crieff Castle, where she had dwelt with angels. She felt that she must bring herself from every quarter to this center of her daily life, and she hailed with delight the sight of Sarah Lochrigg mounting the steps to her door.

"I am requiring your help, Sarah, very much," she said, as she untied her bonnet. "I have not been able to do anything since I came home."

"I don't wonder, Annie. Death is a confounding circumstance; it makes you think, whether you want to or not."

"You could not be with Marion and care about this world, and you know, Sarah, those who have to fight this world must be worldlike."

"I know nothing of the kind, Annie. It seems to me, the children of heaven get a fair share of all the world's good that is going. Look at your father. His new wife has just had twenty thousand pounds left her by an uncle she had never seen, yet the man has been grubbing and saving for her, and your father, for nearly forty years. Tell me about Marion."

Annie did so. She began reluctantly, and then suddenly grew full of fervor, and described in language she did not guess was at her command, the

last few hours of Marion's life—"life that was not *here*, and yet *not quite there*," she said, "but clearly life in the presence of God's waiting messengers. Oh, Sarah! Sarah! there was a sweet, awful reality about it all. I cannot forget. I wish I could."

"Why do you wish that? You are most unworthy to have seen and heard, if you wish you had not. I would be feared of a state like that. Annie, it is easy to die if you are in love with all your kindred. I am worrying a deal anent you, and your father. He isna looking well."

"I saw him at his stepson's Kirk not a month since, and he never looked better."

"Weel, I was just dropping a remark. I am growing old mysel', and I feel age in all my bones, and the world does not grip me as it did. I'm thinking o' giving up worldly care of all kinds. You have made a grand stand, and can do finely without my help and guidance. It is the end o' the fourth year with us, and if you are in my mind, we will settle our affairs, and each take our own way. You'll do well enough wanting me."

"Aunt Sarah, you have been my counsellor and my staff, and I shall miss you sorely. I don't know how the loss of your name may affect the business. If I explain it, no one will take my explanation; and

if I do not explain, they will invent reasons—the worst they can think of—for your withdrawal.”

“Why inform them at all? I will let my name remain in the firm—guaranteed and considered, of course—guaranteed, from any loss or obligation; considered, as to its value in the way o’ money. For my name is a lucky name, and it will be worth your paying a trifle for its use.”

“What would you call a trifle, Sarah?”

“Well, a bit *douceur* of two pounds a month, or we might make it twenty-four guineas a year—that would give me twenty-five pounds a year, and four shillings over for clipping.”

“For clipping?”

“Ay, money has wings and will fly away, if you don’t clip them, and charity is the best o’ clipping. I shall give the four shillings to the Kirk’s poor.”

“Very well. We will say twenty-four guineas a year, Aunt. Will you take boarders again?”

“I would like to see, or hear tell, o’ Mrs. Sarah Lochrigg, doing the like o’ that now. I shall live on my income—it is plentiful—and dress mysel’ in the top o’ your fashions. I shall buy a Victoria, and a pair o’ handsome ponies, and keep a man to drive me, and look after them. Jean Brodick is setting up a handsome Victoria and one good carriage horse.

I fancy a pair o' ponies; they look more for the money."

"So Mrs. Brodick is to have a carriage. I never thought father would allow——"

"*Tut!* It isn't pinching *him* any; Jean has her ain means. She'll have her Victoria, but she isn't so popular as she was—not her fault though."

"Whose then?"

"The Misses Envy and Jealousy—ill-tempered, misdirected auld maids, and auld wives, as you'll find outside o' Satan's home parish."

"They will doubtless make you also unpopular."

"I dare them. Let them try it! I shall wear my English broadcloths, with my long gold chain, and gold bracelets, and sable furs in cold weather; and the best o' silks and poplins, and French muslins in warm weather; and if they as much as cheep at me, I'll make them shamed to show their faces again—either at Kirk or Market. I shall ride in my Victoria wherever I go. I am o'er weak in my legs to walk now."

The smile with which the last assertion was made was not a weak one, and Annie laughed heartily, "Will you have an hour's rest now, Aunt?" she asked.

"An hour's rest! What are you talking about?"

I am fairly worn out with hunger. I had a very early breakfast, and nothing since it; and I am requiring plenty o' nourishing food at my time o' life. Will is to be in Glasgow to-day, that is what brought me here. He says he has news for me."

"Why did he not write his news?"

"Because he is wanting to see *me*, mysel'—that's not an extraordinary fact, I think."

"I hope he is not coming here."

"You cross, unthankful hizzy. The man is giving you his life and his love, and you make it of no more consequence than the dust you shake out o' your clothes. The last time he called on you——"

"He brought me a present of Maltese lace, worth sixty pounds."

"Nonsense! Will never wared so much good money on lace work—never!"

"I say it was worth sixty pounds here; and I could not refuse it, and I hated being indebted to Will, and so the lace hurt me."

"Hurt your pride, you mean. Sell it; the sixty pounds won't hurt your purse."

"It would burn me like fire. I would not sell it if I needed bread. It came of love, and I am not the woman to sell love for money."

"Poor Will! He was just hoping the lace might give you a hint o' what he would lose ten years o' his life to say himsel'."

"*Pshaw!* I have no patience with a lover so faint-hearted. It is absurd. Will has known me all his life, and he is afraid of me. One would think I was some new kind of woman."

"To Will you are a new kind. I know you for the same old ticket of a woman that has been, and is, and will be forever. Do give me some lunch, Annie. I have a tryste wi' the lad at two o'clock, and I wouldn't disappoint him for you and all you are worth."

Rarely had Annie seen her partner so ready to chatter, so good-humored and light-hearted; but when she returned from her visit to Will she was silent and gloomy, and full of thought. Annie wondered what was the matter, but she did not ask. She knew that the first cup of tea would make the silent woman communicative, and she stirred the fire, for it had become rainy and chill, and Sarah turned her chair in front of it. "I want nothing to eat, Annie," she said; "it is the blaze on my cold feet I am needing. I'm not feeling well."

"You were exceedingly well when you went to Will's ship."

"Ay, but I got a chill there—more ways than one. I got a chill there, Annie."

"Ships are cold places."

"It wasn't the ship."

"Surely not Will?"

"No, no; Will's all right. Will is always all right—it is poor Roy again."

Annie did not speak.

"I am saying, Roy is in trouble."

"Wanting money, I suppose. I thought the wonderful Lucia was making twenty, fifty, a hundred pounds a week, in New York."

"She is doing all that yet—but Roy is having no good o' it—they are divorced."

"Aunt Sarah!"

"And she has married herself again, this time to some Frenchman who sings and dances wi' her. Will showed me a New York paper with the whole story in it—and her picture, and Roy's, and the Frenchman's, and Mrs. Brian O'Mara's picture—all of them decorating the miserable details."

"And pray, who is Mrs. Brian O'Mara?"

"She is a widow woman infatuated wi' Roy, and she is enormously rich. Her husband made the money out o' soap, or oil, or washing powder, or something of the kind. They were married as soon

as Roy was free, and went immediately to Paris, where Mrs. O'Mara has a fine house."

"Mrs. Morrison, you mean."

"No, I mean what I say. She will never be mistress to Roy's master."

"Poor Roy!"

"What for are you pitying the man?"

"The widow woman——"

"*Tut!* She'll be a good provider."

"You said Roy was in trouble."

"If he isn't now, he will be—a widow woman, forty years old, with a full purse, and carrying it in her own hand—what can Roy expect? He will be her bought slave, Annie, and she will make him feel it—if her picture does not tell lies about her."

"Is she handsome?"

"Not a bit of it. I am better looking myself. She is one o' them thin-lipped women that are hewn out o' living rock; a masterful-looking body, whose 'you-shallness' could not be hid by the smirking smile o' her lips. I'll warrant anything that she is common and ill-mannered; Roy will find her out when too late to change the M for N in the marriage service."

"I am not sorry for Roy."

"He is a fool. He has sold himself for naught."

He treated you badly, Annie, but whether you ever know it or not, you are sure to be more than revenged, as all who suffer wrong, ultimately are. But my auld heart aches, lassie, it does that."

"I wonder what love amounts to? Is there such a thing? Will went on about the love between Roy and his wife as if it would last though eternity. He represented them to you as ridiculously in love with each other."

"Ridiculously, is your word, Miss Annie. Will never thinks love 'ridiculous'—but it seems the question of love at the long last is the question o' money."

"Not always, Mrs. Lochrigg."

"Gey often, though."

"Everything came to a question of money with Roy."

"Ay, he ought to have been born with handsful, capsful, pocketsful of gold and silver. He was born poor, and fond o' leisure. That is a conjunction that will work havoc wi' any life."

"Did Will say anything about me?"

"Ay, he asked how you were. I told him well, and doing well."

"Was that all?"

"What more are you expecting?"

"Nothing more."

"Well then?"

"I feel sure he said more."

"He did ask if I thought he might call on you. He had a box o' lovely corals. I wanted them badly."

"Did you tell him to call?"

"Only this morning you said you hoped he would not come to your house."

"You surely did not repeat those words."

"I said you were busy, getting ready to open again—and so on—was that right?"

"I suppose so."

"I do wish he had given me the corals. They would have been strikingly bonnie in my black hair."

"Very much so."

"I think I'll ask him for them."

"I certainly would."

"What did he say when you told him I was busy?"

"Something about being thankful for five minutes."

"What did you say to that?"

"I said I would be here to-night, and he could call on me, for as many five minutes as he wanted to."

"Will he call on you to-night?"

"He may—and he may not."

“Sarah, you are a provoking creature.”

“So are you. Here is a poor man, breaking his life in two for a few kind words from you, and you are fairly too mean and too centered in Annie Brodick to give even a Godspeed you, to as fine a sailor as leaves any port in this world. I am loving Will, and it hurts me to see you scorn love as true as ever honest man felt.”

“I do not scorn Will. I do not like him to make me such rich presents.”

“God in heaven! What do you like? Roy gave you no presents, not even an engagement ring, and you made some mocking remarks to me, mysel’, on that subject. Will, by his fine faculty o’ trading, is able to give you laces and jewelry, and your pride is in an insurrection at the naming o’ the same, and ‘you don’t like handsome presents.’ You will go on snubbing all that love you, Annie, till you find yourself in an empty, loveless world. Gold won’t comfort you then. You’ll want love, though it be only the love of one true heart.”

“I have yours.”

“I am an auld woman.”

“You are in the plenitude of your youth. That is all.”

“I am full o’ the disabilities o’ fifty odd years. I

need what love I have for my ain necessities. Forbye, I have small respect for women that cannot marry themselves. There's something wrong with them."

"Aunt, you told me yourself that money-making was better than love, and a husband. Often you said that."

"Ay, I remember saying such words. I knew they were untrue when I said them, and even if they be true, I have changed my mind since then. When I get a better point of view on any subject, I change my position—that's Sarah Lochrigg. Her ideas move on, when she tells them to do so! for circumstances alter cases, Annie, and I think it is now time for you to put love-making before money-making."

Will did not call that night, and Sarah went home in the morning in a mood which deserved to be called "cross." It left Annie unhappy and almost hopeless. What indeed would it profit if she made money and lost all the love that should be hers? Mechanically she went about her business, but her heart was wandering up and down the world, finding no other heart on which it could rest. In the afternoon Will called. He said he was "going out with the next tide, and had just run in to bid her good-

bye." She had a desire to cry, but restrained it, and spoke of Roy's trouble and disappearance, giving Will the same advice as she had given Sarah—to let Roy's destiny have a chance with him for once, and see if experience would not be a better teacher than help. Will thought the suggestion reasonable, and then laid down on the table a box containing the corals, remarking as he did so that "They were pretty, but of small value." And Annie looked at him with eyes full of some wistful hope, and answered:

"It is the thoughtfulness and the liking, Will, that make all gifts precious," and she gave him both her hands, and he held them in his own and looked at her with Love's compelling glance. For a moment a kiss trembled in the space between them, but it did not materialize; then he was gone, and she fancied the door shut slowly and sorrowfully between them.

The interview had not lasted fifteen minutes, but it took possession of Annie. She felt the day was over, and she hoped the night would clear away its disturbances and worries. It did not. She could not help feeling that both Sarah and Will were doing her injustice—and injustice is the sharpest of heart wounds; and looking at the beautiful corals, she put

them away with a little sobbing cry that was pitiful in its very restraint.

Sarah's withdrawal roused in her something like anger. The loss of her money would compel her business to narrower limits, but on the whole she approved that move; and in a few days she was able to assure herself that her life would be both easier and pleasanter when she managed it according to her own ideas and desires. Sarah had often been authoritative and embarrassing, and she had overheard one of her best patrons say she "was glad that Mrs. Lochrigg had disappeared; she was a very forward person." It was quite true. Sarah was "forward"; and her ways were not always the ways of pleasantness to those who did not understand the clarity and sincerity of her nature; and who very likely did not care anything about her nature, only desiring to be allowed to make their own selections without interference.

On the whole, Annie rose bravely to the new conditions. She told herself if people chose to throw her off without any good reason she could live alone, and be content with such consolations as her life and her work brought her. And the sense of injustice under which she burned, at least gave her strength

and courage, and enabled her to assume an air of satisfaction and cheerfulness, until the assumption became a reality. Also, as she realized the sense of her independence, she found a different kind of happiness—the strong delight of one who has the mastery of herself and her destiny. And this is a feeling highly conducive to health and beauty, so that Annie had never been lovelier than at this period of her life.

One evening towards the end of the year, just as she was sitting down to her solitary cup of tea, the Earl of Crieff called. She was glad of some one to talk to, and she asked him to drink a cup with her. He was equally glad of the invitation, for he was longing to speak of Marion, and who could understand such a conversation as well as Annie?

“Going through my dear wife’s desk,” he said, “I found this parcel addressed to you, Miss Brodick, and a note with it, asked me to put it into your hands myself. I now fulfill this obligation.” The address was in Marion’s writing, and Annie kissed it, and then unlocking a desk, placed the parcel safely within its keeping. Then they looked at each other, and were both astonished. Annie had come to her perfect loveliness, the earl was wasted and appeared

to be both ill and unhappy. For a few moments he was silent, then he poured out his misery with an eager passion.

"I am the most wretched of all men," he said in low, hopeless tones. "Oh, Miss Brodick! Oh, Annie! eh?"

"Yes, call me Annie, Marion did."

"Marion! Marion! Oh, Annie, if I could call her back just for five minutes! If I could call her back to tell her what a brute I was, and that my heart is breaking for her forgiveness."

"You were never unkind to Marion? Oh, no!"

"I was, Annie. I was. I did not think it as unkindness then. I thought Marion as hardly doing her duty to me, and my interests, so I grumbled at the monthly bills, and I told her I expected her to watch the housekeeper. I said she was helping my servants to squander all my money, and so ruin my prospects, and oh, Annie! I can see yet, and I shall always see, her small pathetic face as she answered, 'I did my best, Jamie; I will try and do better this month, dear.' She seemed to have no care for the battle with debt I was fighting."

"Poor little woman, how could she? Did you ever explain the condition of your estate to her?"

"Constantly, every day, I believe. She looked

sad and puzzled, and said she was sorry she did not understand about rents and entails, and clearances and such things! Oh, I cannot forget! I cannot forget! her weary eyes, her hopeless efforts to please me. Annie, I don't think I was hard to please, and I loved her, I loved her so much that now I suffer cruelly for every little neglect, and for every cross word or look I gave her."

"Surely you were not neglectful or cross?"

"Indeed that was not my intention, but I did not think then that she was dying. 'I am so tired, Jamie dear,' she would say in excuse, when I complained of some neglect, 'so tired and weak, Jamie,' and now, Annie, her sad, pitiful eyes haunt me day and night, and in every room I hear her thin, childlike voice—'I am so tired, Jamie'! My God, it is awful! This is remorse, Annie, and it is hell!"

"Remorse is hell, but repentance puts remorse far off."

"All my life is broken up, and my people shake their heads and say, 'Poor lady! poor lady!' as if in some way I was to blame for her death."

"Her last look was yours. The last words she said to any mortal were said to you."

"And they were sweet with love—'Good-bye, dear, good-bye!' Oh, Annie, Annie, she has left

me forever, and I shall be lonely and miserable as long as I live." And he rose and walked about the room to his lamentings—"She is dead! My heart is in her grave! Oh for one word with her! only one word!" And he really suffered, for though no longer a passionate lover, he was a man of strong habits, and every household habit had been broken by Marion's death. "I did not think she was really very ill until after the birth of her child," he cried in a fresh paroxysm of self-accusation.

"I never heard of the child," said Annie.

"It was only a girl," he answered, with that unconscious indifference natural to the male representative of old families and large estates. "I think she was glad when it died. She only lived six weeks after it."

"The child is better dead than left to strangers or servants."

"No. I should have seen the little Lady Marion had all things necessary for her welfare and pleasure. Oh, Annie, I am exceedingly sorrowful."

It was, however, fortunate that the earl was his own best comforter. All he wanted was some person to listen to his accusations against himself, and considerately take the extreme edge off them. Annie understood this need, and gave as much of such com-

fort as she conscientiously could. But she was glad when he went away, and her assent to his request that he might call on her when he came to Glasgow, was a decidedly cool one. For he had told her he was at the Crieff Mansion in Edinburgh for the Winter, and came once a week to Glasgow on business.

"I am just as well off without friends," sighed Annie, as soon as she was alone; "when they come my way, they are wanting something from me. Will wants love, Crieff wants sympathy, and Aunt Sarah used me to help her make money. Marion was kind always, but then, I was kind to her." With these words, she turned to the desk and took from it the parcel Marion had sent her. She found in it a letter full of love and heavenly wishes, and the bracelets set with pearls, the sapphire locket, the jeweled Geneva watch, and the diamond and ruby rings she had worn during her Summer in Arran—"these were her own, my Lord Crieff did not buy them, nor did they ever belong to the Crieff jewelry. She knew he would marry again, and she wanted me, rather than some strange woman, to have them. Safely will I keep them, Marion my dear," and the last words she uttered on this subject were not flattering ones—"I hope he will never come here again with his wounded heart; if he does, I'll agree with

him; it stands to reason he is not abusing himself without some cause."

But Crieff came the next week, and many weeks afterwards, and somehow Annie got used to his visits, and never carried out her intention of "agreeing" with him. The man's remorse was genuine, it appealed to her on this ground. And during the Winter, which was dree and severe, he was her only visitor, for Sarah had a tendency to rheumatism that kept her throng watching it, and Will was on a long trading voyage to Australia and homeward ports. As for her father, she never saw him except there was some extraordinary religious meeting at Mr. Saunders' Kirk. Then she went there late, and sitting in the back seats, watched the Deacon during the service; but was among the first to leave the building when it was over. Certainly Deacon Brodick never had the slightest suspicion of her presence, but in some measure these speechless interviews satisfied the hunger of her heart.

Earl Crieff, however, gave her plenty of reasons for thinking a good deal about him. In the first place, she watched with scornful curiosity the quick natural death of what he called "his undying remorse." At first he had been able to make the small, white pleading face, the pathetic eyes, and the weak

childish form, so startlingly present, that Annie had trembled with him; but as the weeks went on, his pictures of the dead Marion became like half-ef-faced pastels, vague and shadowy, but always sweet and smiling. In the second place, Annie noticed a change equally great in the bereaved man's manner toward herself. He began to dress with great care when he called, he brought her expensive flowers, he held her hands longer, and more affectionately than was necessary, and in a score of ways showed that he was simply waiting till the conservative time of his mourning was over in order to make straight-forward love to her. In fact, Crieff wished her to understand this much and Annie required no words to explain his wishes. She knew that she would have an early opportunity to become Countess Crieff if she wished to do so—did she wish it?"

Sometimes she did. She thought of the triumph it would give her over all who pitied, or snubbed, advised, or made excuses for her. A coronet, and the social consideration and pleasures it would bring, was not a matter of indifference to her. But Will Morrison interfered. She had found out that she loved Will, and when she balanced the two men the sailor stood far closer to her than the earl. This heart controversy was a good thing for Annie Brod-

ick; it made money and rank frequently stand aside for love, and so prevented her from becoming subdued to the material objects she worked for.

One day when the Spring had fairly opened, and Annie was busy with its fashions and demands, a lady came into her showroom and asked for Miss Brodick. Annie introduced herself, and her visitor smilingly sat down, and said she would wait until there was more leisure, as her wants could not be hurried. "I am of a nervous temperament," she added with another smile, "and so you must give me my own time and way." And Annie nodded her head, and answered, "You shall have all of your own time and way you wish."

In an hour they were alone in the room, and Annie turned to her visitor. "I can now give you all my attention," she said, "and whatever you wish."

"I wish—I wish—Annie, dear Annie!"

Then Annie understood, as in a flash of light, that she was speaking to her stepmother. "You are Mrs. Bro——"

"No, no! Not that name, please."

"It is impossible to give you the other."

"I know. I am not expecting it—but, Annie, you might call me Jean, as most people do."

"Why did you come here?"

"For more than one reason, but the main one is your father. Ever since Sarah left the business, he has worried night and day about you."

"What for? I do better without Mrs. Lochrigg."

"No doubt you do. Annie, if you would try and love me a little—if you would give me a chance to win your love"—and in her eagerness she rose, laid her hand on Annie's arm, and lifting a loving, pleading face to hers, said softly—"Try me, dear—be just to me, Annie; your father says you would be just if every other virtue failed. I think you would soon learn to put up with me—perhaps, in time, you would love me."

It was impossible to resist the earnest, affectionate woman. Annie took her hand, and kept it in her own. "Come into my parlor," she said, "and we will have a cup of tea, and talk the subject over." For the subject had suddenly assumed pleasant possibilities to Annie. And when Jean finally made some tearful complaints of Leslie Kerr, and Mrs. McLean, and others, Annie was quite ready to take her part.

"You see, Annie," said Jean, "your father and I have kept silence about you and your affairs, one way or another, and Leslie Kerr and that ill woman

McLean, Jane McFarlane, Isabel Gowe, and others have taken to pitying you, because pity implies all sorts of unkind things about your father and myself. 'Poor Annie Brodick!' is their slogan, and your father is cruel and selfish, and I am sly, and have the doited auld Deacon under my feet, and so 'poor Annie has a dour hard fight wi' a cold world.' That is one o' their ways o' talking. Then likewise they are sure I have got all o' your father's money in my power, and when my uncle left me twenty thousand pounds, they snickered and giggled at the idea and cried, 'A likely story indeed.' If honest inquiry was made the uncle would neither be found nor heard tell of; and the like o' such slandering talk. And your father says *tut*, and it's not worth minding, but I do mind it—I do that."

"Poor dear! I know you feel it. Why do you not set Sarah on them?"

"Well, Sarah may be my friend, but she is very thick with all o' them. Since she set hersel' up to be the leader o' social affairs in our town, I have lost all favor. I was President of the Dorcas Society, and the Woman's League, and the Women's Christian Association, but Sarah sits in my chair at all the three clubs now."

"To be sure. Sarah will always have the chair wherever she goes."

"And lately, Annie, there has been queer talk about Earl Crieff and yourself. Sarah is boasting that you will be a countess ere the year is gone by, and your father is troubled in his heart about what is said, and I am troubled too, Annie."

"What for are you troubled, Jean?"

"For the sake o' poor Will Morrison—that's all. But you know how talk grows, the clash and claver frets your father, and it will fairly break the heart o' poor Will—and he'll hear it before his feet are on dry ground."

"As to the earl, Jean, that is my affair. I can sort it as soon as I like, but I will suffer no one to say a word against either father or you. I have been treated by both of you better than I deserve. You had cause to speak ill of me, but you have never done so."

"Never one word, Annie."

"What do you wish me to do, Jean?"

"I wish you to come to Arran on Friday—not too soon in the day—and go with your father and myself to 'a Penny Reading at the Woman's Literary Club.' You can dress fine for that occasion, and look the whole crowd o' envious women down."

"I will come, Jean."

"I shall not tell your father I have been here."

"I won't name your visit, Jean; but I thank you

for it. Why do you want me to come late in the day?"

"I have a good reason. I hope you will find it out. And, dear Annie, do give yourself a chance to love me."

"I'll love you now, and I'll love you more and more as days and weeks go by."

"Thank you, Annie! I will do all that is right, dear."

"I know you will. So will I."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

EAST OR WEST, HOME IS BEST

ON the Friday following Annie Brodick arose to go to her father. But it cannot be said her return home was in any sense that of a prodigal daughter. She had spent nothing foolishly, she had built up a prosperous business, she had acquired money and property, she was in radiant health, and sincerely glad at heart. Only Love compelled her. It was Love that made her dress with such richness and taste. Love that filled both her hands with gifts. Love that made her sing so happily as she packed her trunk, and ran lightly downstairs to the waiting cab. She had arranged her arrival as Jean desired—towards evening—and no one noticed the veiled lady who drove so quietly away. Jean, however, was watching for her, and their meeting was as pleasant as two happy women could make it. Half-an-hour afterwards, the Deacon opened the garden gate, and they heard him call “Jean! Jean!” a little impatiently.

“I aye go as far as the gate to meet him,” explained Jean, “but we will just let him enter his lane

this night. So he opened the door with a trifle of fret on his face, and then he saw Jean and Annie sitting affectionately together. Love and astonishment made him stand still and silent, then Annie rose and went hurriedly to meet him.

"Father! father!" she cried, "I have been all wrong, father, forgive me!" and she stretched out both her hands to him. He took them with passionate tenderness, and drew her to his breast.

"I forgave thee years ago."

"And you will love me again, as you used to love me?"

"I never stopped loving thee—not for one moment."

Then there were some whispered words and kisses—not many—for Love wants no excuses and no explanations. Love casts the whole wrong into some abyss of memory, and forgets it has ever been. In a few moments they turned happy faces to Jean, and going forward together kissed her. And the blessedness of the peacemakers that night filled the old Brodick House with a new and heavenly joy.

While Jean ordered the tea table, Annie walked with her father round the place. There had been many changes, and Annie noticed and approved them all—the new stable and Jean's horse and Vic-

toria—the new well house—and the new back gate. Fresh trees had been set out, and a large berry patch put in cultivation—and a little glass house in which Jean kept her rare flowers in the Winter, and the Deacon prepared his early vegetables—all common things enough, but it is the common things that are the great things in our daily life, and Annie was full of interest, and the Deacon of satisfaction. He held her hand as they walked and talked, just as he had done when she was a little lassie, and when Jean came to tell them “tea was ready” she took Annie’s other hand, and thus they brought her to hearth and table between them.

After tea the Deacon went to the byre and the stable to look after “the beasties” and to smoke his pipe, and Jean and Annie walked about the garden—then in all the sweet loveliness of Spring, with a full May moon above it. The perfume would have been almost intoxicating but for the sharp tang and savor of the fresh salt breeze from the sea; but at that hour the incense which so fitly sweetened their thanksgiving for restored love, was not specially noticed. Annie wanted to know why Jean had asked her to come rather late and avoid notice, and Jean answered:—

“As I told you, there is an entertainment at the

Woman's Club to-night, and I did not want any one to know you were in town—especially Mrs. Lochrigg, and it is hard work keeping anything from her eyes and ears.”

“Oh, I understand Sarah. I do not mind her ways.”

“But she would have told Will, and that would spoil everything.”

“Will Morrison?”

“Yes.”

“Is he here?”

“I think so. He reached Glasgow this afternoon, and there was a telegram from him, promising to be at the entertainment to-night. He is our great singer, you know.”

“Singer! Will Morrison sing! I am astonished.”

“Did you never hear him?”

“Never.”

“I thought as much. And if Will knew you were in the hall to-night, he would be dumb; and that would be ten thousand pities, for he is a singer in ten thousand; and if he should take a violin in his hand it would not be catgut he touched—Oh, no! Will would play upon your heartstrings.”

“However, wherever, did he learn?”

“The music and the song were in his heart, and

at sea he found plenty of time to practice. If he does not know you are present, you will both see and hear the real Will Morrison—but if he knows——”

“Oh, he shall not know!”

“I do not want Sarah to know either. She would make a speech about your return, and be sure to say—good-naturedly, of course—something to make your ears burn.”

The little plan pleased Annie, and she fell readily into its spirit and motive. They pledged the Deacon to silence, and then went early to the hall and slipped without notice into their seats. The place was soon crowded, and at eight o'clock the curtain went up, and showed them the platform with the performers on it, and Mrs. Lochrigg in the President's chair. She was richly and fitly gowned, and rose with abounding self-possession and opened the meeting.

But among the performers there was no Will Morrison, and Annie was disappointed. She listened listlessly to a woman singing “I'm O'er Young to Marry Yet,” and to several young and middle-aged men reciting—for all Scotchmen sing or recite their national loves and glories—and then she heard the President making an apology for “the vocalist whom they all loved, Captain Will Morri-

son, who had promised to be with them, but was not—but Will's not to be blamed," she continued, as she fell into her usual familiar eloquence; "if the man was driving a lubberly engine, on a straight steel rail, with steam enough to blow her to pieces under his hand, we should have the right to expect him on schedule time—prompt—but when he's driving a contrary ship, against winds shifting and unruly, and waves in tantrums and tempers, we be to make every allowance for the same; for a ship is like a woman, you never know where you have her, and our Will's ship at least has a woman's name, for she's called *The Lass of Arran*. Perhaps there is some lass in this meeting who knows *why* she is so called. I do not, and who can tell Will Morrison's——?"

At this interrupted question, Will suddenly appeared. He said a few words to the President—who assumed her most presidential air, and then added, "Ladies and gentlemen, it is just as I expected, the ship was to blame, of course—the man was right—he always is right. We all of us know that much—or ought to. The Captain will now give us the song he has been keeping us on the watch and the wait for."

Annie watched the Captain, and could hardly believe her eyes. Will Morrison shy! Who said it?

Who thought it? He came forward with an easy, commanding manner, bowed with beaming smiles to the cheering audience, then went to the piano, struck a few clear chords, and as he was walking forward again began singing in thrilling, resonant tones—

“I learnt to walk to the sound of the waves,
The shingly beach along;
The salt spray dashed against the pane;
That was my cradle song.

“The sea bird’s cry was far before
The thrush’s song to me;
O, my heart still longs and listens for
The music of the sea!

“To drag nets full of gleaming fish
Under the silver moon;
To watch ships on the far blue line,
Grow nearer in the noon;

“To make friends with the storm, instead
Of a city’s din, for me;
My heart still longs and listens for
The music of the sea!”

The Deacon had once called such reunions “incredible misery,” but he had been in course of education since that time, and no one among the crowd of delighted listeners expressed themselves more enthusiastically than Robert Brodick. He led the clamor for the encore, and was hardly then satisfied.

Annie was quiet; she could not talk; she had this new man to consider. It was a Will of whom she had never dreamt—but she liked him. He was handsome, she had always seen that; his uniform was handsome, and became him perfectly; that was nothing strange; his gentle voice, and beaming smile, these things were familiar; it was his air and manner that astonished her. There was no trace of shyness in anything he did or said. He walked to the front of the platform as calmly as if he was on his own deck, and his attitude was that of a man confident of himself, and expressing that confidence by a manner easy and graceful, with a touch of old-fashioned courtesy in it.

She told herself she could wish nothing changed about him, and when, in response to urgent demands, he sang two more songs, she sighed with pleasure and relief to find they were without a trace of that comic element which is the great vocal temptation of inexperienced men. Will kindled a tempestuous patriotism as he sang of the mariners

“that guard our native seas,
Whose flag has braved a thousand years,
The battle and the breeze:—”

and finally sent every one home with hearts full of kindness humming,

“Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And days o’ lang syne.”

Then came Will’s surprise. When he reached the door, the Deacon with his wife and daughter stood in the center of a little crowd of friends, and Annie stepped forward to greet him, to praise him, to thank him for the delight he had given her. She understood now his weakness, and she did not permit him to fall into it. Her kindness and pretty familiarities kept him at his normal pitch, and when Sarah had exhausted her exclamations, he proposed the party should go to Lochrigg House for supper.

“Indeed, No!” answered Sarah. “I am not prepared for such an invasion.”

“I am!” cried Jean; “it will be an extraordinary pleasure and compliment. Robert will drive Sarah and myself home, and there’s nothing to hinder Annie and Will sauntering up the hill in the moonlight. It is a heavenly night to loiter a wee in.”

Then with a happy manifest hurry, Will took Annie’s hand and slipped it under his arm, and they walked away together—walked away consciously into Loveland, and fearlessly faced its delights and its dangers. Song had enchanted Will, its influence was still over him; he was in a condition where song and love make a man eloquent; and before he had

time to consider anything but his great love, and its need of expression, he was pouring out his heart's wealth of long-nursed affection. His words were sweet and eloquent to Annie, and though she was speechless, she gave him signs of her sympathy that he could not mistake. At last he asked:

"Annie, dearest girl on earth, have you heard, do you know what my words mean?"

"Will," she answered, "dear Will, I have been waiting for you to say these very words all of two years. I know, Will, all that you mean, and I am proud and happy to know it."

Then the glorious walk was a series of interludes whose joy cannot be written down, for

"Love's the shyest bird
Mortal ever heard,
Listen rapt and silent when he sings;
Do not seek to see,
Lest the vision be,
But a flutter of departing wings."

Supper was nearly over when they reached home, but Jean was a sweet hostess; she declared "it was a pity for all who could not linger till midnight under such a sky. If Sarah, herself and the Deacon had not, all of them, been under the thumb of rheumatism, they would have loitered a while also"—and

so on. But her pleasant excusing was not necessary, for Will went at once to Annie's father.

"Deacon," he said, "Annie has just promised to be my wife, and we are seeking your consent and blessing. God knows, I never expected such an astonishing happiness."

"Annie has chosen well," answered the father. "I could not wish her a better husband. God bless you both!" and he gave his hand to Will, and lifted Annie's lovely face and kissed it. Sarah whimpered a little, and Jean smiled, and the lovers tried to eat some supper, but did not succeed very well.

"You may take away your dishes, Jean," said Sarah. "Eating is too common a thing for folks in the glorified condition o' newly engaged lovers. And order my Victoria, Jean. I am going home to my bed, for I'll be here early in the morning. I have something to say to Miss Annie, ere she becomes Mrs. Morrison."

After Sarah's departure the Deacon went into the garden for half-an-hour to "bethink himself," and Jean and Annie went to the room Jean had furnished for her stepdaughter with every suitable comfort and beauty. They were too wide awake to sleep, and longed for a little private talk on the great event that had occurred. Throwing wide the

casements to let the scent of the lilacs fill the pretty place, Jean said:

"You are very happy, Annie, and you are going to be far happier, my dear lassie."

"I believe so, Jean, and I owe you much this night."

"Love is the greatest thing in life, Annie."

"I am sure of it, and yet——"

"What, dearie?"

"It is not the greatest thing. I thought once that it was, but I found out through many sorrowful days that truth and honor and courage are still greater things, and that love is not worth a penny bit unless it grows out on the same stem with them. That is why I love Will. I cannot separate his love from his honor, and truth, and courage, and so my heart rests surely on him."

Nor did it strike these two simple women that they had come naturally by the faith inherent in every true love, to the faith apprehended by every true lover—

"I could not love thee, dear, so much
Loved I not honor more."

"There is one thing, Jean, which on this night affects me beyond all other considerations—it is the

wonderful ways by which I have been compelled to accept the love and happiness God intended for me. I refused Will, I was determined to marry Roy, and I have been forced by a series of unlooked-for events to put Roy far from my thoughts, and joyfully accept Will. I have been compelled to take what I did not want, and to do what I hated to do, in order that I might receive the desire of my heart. And I think constantly of what Professor Balmuto said to me one night, when I was in great trouble and anxiety, about a strange step I had been forced, as I thought, to take."

"You need not have taken that step, Annie."

"I know that now, Jean, but my courage and my love failed me, and I did take it. Well then, I was forced to come back to the place of my first wrong step. And, Jean dear, if I took the wrong step because of your coming here, see now, it was you who came, and with sweet compulsion forced me back to my point of turning, and to-night I do thank God with all my heart that the same goal is still on the same track. Oh, Jean, as the good Doctor said, *The Hands of Compulsion are the Hands of Compassion*. For the road was made smooth to me, and all the way I was carried safely in the arms of Love."

"Doctor Balmuto was a good man."

"He told me to throw myself absolutely upon the belief that everything which *came to me* and was *given to me* was the very thing I *needed*, the very thing *worth having*. Trouble and entanglements we get through our own will, and our own choosing. It is the truth, Jean. Then when we know not what to do, the *Hands of Compulsion* force us into the right way. This time God used your hands, Jean," and she lifted Jean's hands and kissed them.

The next morning Sarah was early at the Brodick house, for of course there was a great deal to say and to do before two lives, hitherto set so far apart, could become comfortably one. Sarah fretted, or pretended to fret, o'er the break-up of such a grand business as she had founded. But Annie, on this subject, would listen to no arguments.

"I am resolved," she said positively. "I want a home. I am weary of showrooms."

"And pray, Miss, how will you make a home with your man thousands o' miles away from it, the better half o' his time?"

"Will knows. He will tell you."

"Will knows! What credulous rubbish! But of course Will is the oracle now—once it was poor Aunt Sarah."

At this perilous juncture, Will and the Deacon

entered together, and Annie's remark was justified. "I have something to tell you," said the Deacon, "something you will all be glad to hear. Will, our Will, is going into partnership with Joseph Glendenning, the big shipbuilder. Many years ago Will saved him from drowning, and ever since he has been asking Will to join him in his business. For he knows, as well as all Clydeside and Arran, that in the matter of yachts, and yacht-building, we may all take off our hats to Will Morrison. I remember when he was a slip of a youth, that people used to say, 'Will got a yacht-master's certificate with his baptismal lines,' and I'm not denying it; for yachts, and all that belongs to them, are a kind of knowledge you bring into the world with you."

"You were once keen about yachts yourself, Deacon," said Will.

"In a way, Will, but I am knowing nothing about the mathematics o' shipbuilding. I never trusted to figures, or easy lines, or small displacements. I like a stout breeze and a double-reefed mainsail. But it is years and years since I raced a forty-ton cutter up the back o' Cantyre, north to Tobermory—a bygone now—and we will let it rest, but I can tell you all, I am gey glad Will is going with Glendenning, and I have just told him if I can help him

in the way o' siller, he can call on me. Annie has no reason to go penniless to her new home."

"Right, Deacon Brodick," said Sarah. "And as Sarah Lochrigg is never behind anyone in a kind deed, or a good investment, I may as well say I can go as far as you, and maybe a step or two further."

"I also have a little to spare, if Will needs more than he has ready," said Jean, with a nod and a smile at the happy young man. But Annie, who had more money in Glasgow banks than anyone dreamed of, said not a word. She was thinking of her grandmother's and mother's silent money waiting so long for her "emergency"; and she was inclined to keep up a security against ill-fortune so defensible. No one noticed her reticence but Sarah, and Sarah's remark—made with a kind of mocking admiration—was not clear in its meaning to the unenlightened.

"You are an excellent young person, Annie Brodick," she said, "and if King Solomon had happened to discover you, he would have found the one wise woman in a thousand, that he didn't find."

"I generally know what I am doing, Sarah," Annie answered, with a smile and an intelligent look, which plainly asked for the subject to be dropped.

“You think you know what you are doing. Are you sure o’ that?” continued Sarah. “Lizzie McDonald was saying to me, only yestreen, ‘I hear the Brodicks are to have a countess in their family.’ And I said, ‘Indeed, Miss McDonald, and who may that be?’ And she said, ‘It is well known that Miss Brodick is engaged to Earl Crieff, and their marriage only waiting till the year o’ mourning for the dead wife is by past. Now, then, how is that for a report? And I want to know why Miss Brodick is putting away the Earl o’ Crieff for the like o’ Will Morrison?’”

Then Annie, blushing divinely, went to her lover’s side, and he drew her closer within his arms, and she answered in tones sweeter than song,

“Because she loved the sailor!”



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